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ARGOSY

STORIES BY

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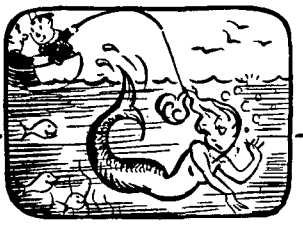

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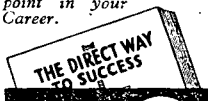

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ARGOSY

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Look, Stranger

LOOK, stranger, at this island now
The leaping light for your delight discovers,
Stand stable here
And silent be,
That through the channels of the ear
May wander like a river
The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause
Where the chalk wall falls to the foam, and its tall ledges
Oppose the pluck
And knock of the tide,
And the shingle scrambles after the sucking surf, and the gull lodges
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands;
And the full view
Indeed may enter
And move in memory as now these clouds do,
That pass the harbour mirror
And all the summer through the water saunter.

WYSTAN HUGH AUDEN

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GIVE A MAN ROPE . . .

"That is what you always said, Jan," remarked the widow

by STUART CLOETE

WHEN a woman goes to live with a man, there's talk. So when Nella came to live with old Smitty, there was plenty said by the old wives in the *dorp*. " His niece, indeed," they said, " a pretty girl like that—" as if a man never had a pretty niece before.

The one who talked the most was the Widow Coetzee. She was famous for talking and was said to have had designs on Big Jan ever since his wife had died five years ago. Her remarks were discounted in the *dorp* because everyone knew of her feeling for Smitty, and nowhere in the world is a jealous woman of fifty-odd expected to have much good to say of a pretty girl of seventeen.

The talk never worried Jan Smit. He was glad to have Nella with him, even though he was sorry for the cause of it—her being left an orphan when his brother died, and penniless too, owing to the tricks of a cunning lawyer who had swindled her father in a most respectable and legal manner. Of course, Nella would get Sterkfontein when Smitty died, and while he lived he'd take care of her and try to get her a good husband. But supposing she had not had a fine uncle like him ?

This was in his mind as they drove into the *dorp*. The *dorp* always made him think of it, for it was in villages and towns that the spiders wove their tempting webs. He looked at the girl beside him in the Cape cart. She was a pretty thing—golden, like a Jersey heifer, if there were such a thing as a blue-eyed Jersey. It was a pleasure to have her around.

He looked at a white board hanging outside one of the houses. It was a new board with some writing on it in black. He was against new things, against changes. Few were ever for the better.

Nella gripped his arm. " Stop," she said. Then, " Don't stop."

He tightened the reins and said, " Shall I stop or go on ? "

" Go on. Please go on and then drive round again slowly."

" Why ? " he asked. " We've got a lot to do."

" Please," she said.

He let the horses trot, turned right and drove round, past the backs of the houses that lined the street, and up it again.

" Slow," Nella said, " slow."

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He checked the blacks while she stared at the new sign. "It's him," she said. "Oh, Uncle, it's him."

"What's him?" he said.

"It's Jarrold, the lawyer," she said. "He's the man that killed Pa, pressing him, always pressing him."

"The hand of the Lord is in this," Smitty said. "*Ja*, here I clearly see the hand of the Lord. The Lord has delivered him to me like the head of John the Baptist on a platter." He closed his hand into a great gnarled fist. "Often," he said, "I've thought I should go after him. It was often in my heart to go and seek him out, but does not the Lord say, 'Vengeance is mine'? And who am I to go against the Holy Word? But now the Lord has sent him to me. Now I am the Lord's instrument."

"What will you do, Uncle?" The girl looked up into his face with her blue saucer eyes.

"I shall make a plan. A plan by which he will destroy himself. Give a man rope, I always say, and he'll hang himself." Then he said, "Did he ever see you, Nella?"

"No, he never saw me."

"And your name was not on any of the papers?"

"No."

"A plan," he said, "is made in three parts. It is made of the planner—that is me; the enemy—that is him; and the trap. It is the trap we must think of. Now, with this kind of man, there is only one sort of bait to use. We will catch him with gold."

"But we have no gold, Uncle."

"No, we have no gold, but we will make some." He laughed. "We will make gold and set the trap. Now we must go to the store and buy what we need; then we will make our plan. Tomorrow is also a day, my young maid, and a good plan is not made in a moment. Get out, girl, and do not worry—your father will be avenged. Two things are very good," he said.

"Two things?"

"*Ja*. First, that he never saw you. And the other thing is that the name of Smit is common. There are a thousand Smits."

By the next morning the plan had begun to take form. Smitty put on his best suit, a dark one, and his top hat with the wide *crêpe* band he had worn since the death of his wife.

When Nella asked him why he wore his top hat, he told her it was part of the plan. "A man's hat," he said, "declares his intentions, and this"—he touched his brim—"is my funeral hat. It is also my wedding hat and my baptismal hat. It is the hat that I wear on important occasions."

Leaving her to think these remarks over, he mounted his horse and rode to town. He went to call on *Mevrou* Coetzee. She was

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a fine figure of a woman and sympathetic to him. The widow welcomed him and gave him coffee. He sat on the edge of his chair.

" *Mevrou*," he said. " I have come to you for help."

" *Ja*," she said, " I am a woman who is always ready to help a fine-looking man." She smiled at him.

" When I was young, I was a fine man," he said. " I was as strong as a bull."

" You are still a fine man, Jan Smit," she said. " You are like a great spreading oak."

He said, " That is well spoken because I am not easy to cut down. And you, *Mevrou*, are like wine. You go to a man's head, and with age you improve, becoming more mellow."

" We would make a fine couple," she said. " No longer young, it is true, but fine and full of sense."

" But it is because of that, because you are a true woman, I want your advice. But what I tell you is a secret. Is that understood ? "

" I will tell no one," she said. " Not a soul. Not even the wife of the *predikant*. Not a soul, Jan."

" Well," he said, " there are diamonds on Sterkfontein."

" *Magtig* ! " she said. " Diamonds ? Diamonds are better than sheep on a farm."

" *Ja*," he said, " but I am a funny man. I do not like strangers on my farm and I do not want money. I have enough. So I have come to ask you what to do."

" Since nobody knows you have diamonds on your farm, what does it matter ? " she asked.

" They will find out," he said, " and my peace of mind will be broken like a cup that falls on a stone floor."

" It is true there are diamonds not far off," she said. " There are diamonds at Swartpan, only twenty miles away."

" Did you ever see a diamond ? " he asked.

" Only on a woman's hand." She looked down at her hand. " Never a wild diamond."

Putting his hand in his pocket, he brought out a little rag. It was one of Nella's handkerchiefs tied round the top with a *voorslag*. He undid the whiplash and, holding the open handkerchief towards her, said, " *Kyk*, look."

" Diamonds ? "

" *Ja*," he said. He held one up.

" They do not shine much."

" That is only afterwards. When they are wild they do not shine. The difference between a cut diamond and these," he said, " is the difference between a woman working in the kitchen and the same woman sitting in her parlour in a silk dress, with her hands folded in her lap and her ankles crossed in front of her."

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"*Ja*," she said.

"Now that you understand why nothing must come out about this, tell me what I should do."

"Do?" she said. "Do nothing. But above all, allow no strangers on your land."

"But there is a right of way running through the farm that I cannot close. A right of way that is one hundred Cape feet wide."

"Then make people stay on it and do not allow them to stop."

"How shall I do that?" he asked.

"With a notice board. With the writing on it in black letters."

"Like the one the new attorney has?"

"*Ja*, like that."

"Perhaps the man who painted that sign could make it."

"*Ja*," she said.

"And perhaps," he said, "you who are an educated woman, could arrange it for me. For I have never mastered my letters."

"For you I will arrange it," she said.

"I will come and get it next Saturday."

"Come and we will drink coffee again."

"I do not know what I should do without you, Selina. I know of no one else I could trust with such a secret."

"It is safe with me, Jan."

"It is safe with you," he said. "That I know." He picked up his hat from beside his chair and then said. "*Totsiens*, Selina. You are a fine woman. You are like wine."

"You are a fine man," she said, "like an oak."

When he mounted his horse he thought: *Ja*, I am a fine man and Sterkfontein is a fine farm, and no less fine with diamonds on it. Wild diamonds, he said to himself. If you did not know better, rock crystals rubbed with a little axle grease looked very like diamonds in a room where the shade was down. And by now, before he got home, half the world would know his secret. Such a story was too good to keep for more than an hour. First the *predikant's* wife, then the sign painter, and then the attorney. Selina Coetzee was a good, a fine woman. God had made her like that. Big—everything about her was big, including her tongue.

On Saturday, when the shopping was done, he tied the horses to *Mevrou* Coetzee's hitching post and went into the house with Nella. They drank coffee and ate rusks. *Mevrou* Coetzee said how pretty Nella was, and he said, "*Ja*, she's a *mooi meisie* and ripe as a plum. That is why I need that notice."

"It's ready," *Mevrou* Coetzee said, and she pointed to it.

"What does it say?" Smitty asked.

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" It says that it is forbidden to loiter on the road or to move off it under danger of prosecution."

" That will keep the young bloods off," he said.

" Young bloods ? " Nella said.

" *Ja*," he said. " When they come courting now, they must come right up to the house and no loitering behind trees waiting for my *mooi meisie* to come out to them. No," he said, " mine is a respectable house, and the courting must be done properly in the parlour, with the horse tied to the *stoep*."

" But I—" Nella said.

" *Ja*, you," he said, " you have come to an age when young ladies begin to have thoughts in their heads that are beyond making butter and baking bread. Thank you, Selina," he said to the widow, and picking up the board, he went out to the cart.

Nella said, " *Oom* Jan, what is this about men ? There are no men."

" No," he said, " but there will be," and he began to laugh.

" It is not a laughing matter," Nella said, " to say things like that about me. I am a good girl. I do not go behind bushes with men. And besides, there are no men."

" It is the plan," he said. And he laughed till he was doubled up.

The next day being Sunday, Smitty did nothing. He drove Nella to church and thanked the Lord for delivering the enemy to him in so convenient a manner, and for the length of the tongue He had given to Selina Coetzee.

On Monday morning, by eight o'clock, the board was up and the trap was baited. The board and Selina's whispers would be enough. Jan took his rifle from over the kitchen fire and leaned it against the wall of the *stoep*. Now all he had to do was wait.

Nella asked him what the rifle was for.

" To enforce the law," he said. " To keep men on the straight and narrow path."

" Men ? " she said. " What men ? "

The men who will come after my little pot of gold, my beautiful little maid."

" Uncle," she said, " are you well ? Shall I make you coffee and fix you a purge of herbs ? "

" You will see," he said, " and I need no purge."

" *Ja*," she said, " I will see."

He said, " And no going behind the bushes ! "

This time she laughed, but she blushed a little also because of the ideas he was putting into her head.

It was a week before anything happened. Then one day, while he was working at his forge, Nella came running.

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"Uncle," she said, "there is a cart coming with four horses and in it sits Jarrold with another man."

"The bait," he said. "He nibbles like a fish that sees a worm."

"I shall hide," she said.

"*Ja*," he said. "Hide like a modest maid till I call. Prepare coffee." He went to the *stoep* and sat on a bench, with his rifle across his knees. The cart pulled up. A boy got out and went to the horses' heads. The two men got down. Leaning his rifle against the wall, Jan went to meet them. Holding out his hand, he said, "I am Jan Smit."

"Jarrold," the lawyer said.

"*Ja*," Jan said, "I have seen you in church."

"This is Mr. Fanshaw."

Smit put out his hand. "Come on to the *stoep* and drink coffee." He shouted for coffee and Nella brought it.

"Now," he said, "what can I do for you?"

"This gentleman," Jarrold said, "is interested in your farm."

"It is a most interesting farm," Smitty said. "You saw my notice, perhaps. That is why I put it up. The farm is so interesting that I wish to keep it to myself."

He picked up his rifle again, stroked the butt, and put it down.

Jarrold said, "Well, it's no use beating about the bush. My client wishes to buy Sterkfontein."

"The farm is not for sale," Smitty said.

"We would pay well."

"It is not for sale. A man does not sell his home."

"Well, perhaps you would sell the mineral rights?"

"Mineral rights? There are no minerals here, *Magtig!*" he said. "I made this place. I know every foot of it."

"*Ja*," Jarrold said, "but under the ground there may be some. It would be a speculation."

"Ah," Smitty said. "You wish to speculate? There is nothing wrong with that."

"Then you will sell the rights?"

"*Ja*, I will sell the rights. But not the farm."

"And we can prospect?"

"No," he said. "No prospecting, no holes, no strangers. If you want to speculate, you speculate."

"And the price?" Jarrold said.

"Ten thousand pounds in gold," Smitty said.

"You are mad," Jarrold said.

"I am of sound mind. I do not wish to sell. There are no minerals. And, what is more, I will only give you a month to make up your minds. I do not wish to be bothered all the time."

When they had gone, he stood on the *stoep*, with his rifle in the

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crook of his arm, watching them go. Young Molteno was the man he wanted now, and, saddling his horse, he rode in to see him.

Molteno did transport work. He was a young man who would make a good husband for Nella. *Ja*, they were as good as married already, only they did not know it. With her married, he'd continue his courtship of Selina—not that she wouldn't jump at him like a fish after a fly in a pond, but there was no hurry, and it was pleasant to be called an oak by so handsome a woman, a fine woman who must weigh two hundred and fifty pounds if she weighed an ounce.

Frikkie Molteno was easily found, and Smitty put the thing up to him—not the marriage, but the trick he wanted him to play, for this trick was the linchpin that held the structure of his plan together. " If you want to make some money, Frikkie," he said, " I have a plan."

" *Ja*, *Oom* Jan," Frikkie said. " I want to make money. Money is good."

" It is good and this is easy. Do what I say and the money is yours—a hundred pounds, maybe."

" A hundred pounds ? "

" *Ja*. You will go to the lawyer, Jarrold, and tell him you will bring him two bags of earth from my farm, just where my road crosses the drift, if he will give you a hundred pounds."

" He will laugh at me."

" He will not laugh if you look wise and say, ' *Meneer*, a hundred pounds for such earth is cheap—who knows what you may not find in it ? ' Say, ' With that earth you will have something to show. Surely, with so much at stake, it is worth *speculating* a hundred pounds ? ' Use that word, Frikkie—' speculate '—and watch his face."

" I will use the word."

" But that is not all. He will say, ' How will you get it, since old Smitty sits on his *stoep* with his rifle in his hand and lets no one halt on the road ? ' And then you will say, ' I have a plan.' And he will say, ' What do you know about this matter, anyway ? ' And you will say, ' I know that diamonds are valuable and that before long others will be in the race. Others who will be glad to pay a hundred pounds for the earth. I only came to see you first because you are a good man who goes to church on Sunday.' "

Frikkie said, " I heard something about diamonds."

Smitty said, " And you have an old ox to slaughter ? "

" *Ja*. Old Bloom. He is past work now. But what has this to do with the matter ? "

" It has this to do. When Jarrold says, ' What is your plan ? you will say, ' I will go over the right of way with my waggon, and when I reach the ford one of my oxen will fall dead.' "

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"Why will it?"

"Bloom will fall dead," Smitty said. "You will see that he does—with poison. At the ford you will stop as if to fix a strap, and put poison into his mouth so that he falls dead."

"I could not poison Bloom," Molteno said. "He is a good ox. It would be like poisoning a friend."

"You were going to shoot him," Smitty said.

"To shoot is different."

"You can shoot him," Smitty said, "but you must tell Jarrold you will poison him."

"That I can do," Molteno said.

"And then you say to Jarrold, 'When he is dead, I will go running to the house and say, "Smitty, one of my oxen is dead by the ford. He died suddenly and I had best bury him in case he had a contagious disease." And Smitty will say, "Yes, Frikkie, bury him deep."' When you bury him, you will fill two bags with gravel from the drift. That is the plan."

"It is a pretty plan and I will do it."

"Then, *totsiens jong*, *totsiens* and good luck."

The very next day, Jan saw Molteno's waggon coming by. He watched it stop at the ford. "Nella!" he shouted. "Comb your hair and put on your Sunday dress and the pink *kappie* I got you."

"*Ja*, I will if you say so, but why?"

"Because I say so—and fast."

He heard a shot in the distance and saw Frikkie running towards the house. It was a long run.

"*Magtig!*" Frikkie shouted when he got near. "My ox is dead—so suddenly I think it may be a plague. What shall I do?"

"*Do*, you young rascal? Bury it deep and fast. Come, I will get you a pick and shovels and give you two boys."

While the ox was being buried, Smitty told Nella to take coffee and rusks to the ford. In an hour she was back, her face as pink as her *kappie*.

"What happened?" he said.

"Nothing," she said. "Nothing, Uncle. They buried the ox, and Frikkie Molteno is coming to see you tonight."

"To see me?"

"To see us."

"You see what my notice has done?" he said. "It has brought a fine young man to our door. What did he say to you?"

"He said—" she paused. "He said he did not know I was so grown up."

Later, Frikkie Molteno came as he had said he would.

"I got the money," he said, "and I'm grateful to you." He

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came close and whispered. "Bloom suffered nothing," he said.

"He has the earth?" Smitty asked.

"*Ja*, he has it."

"Good. Then sit with the girl. Pretend it is her you came to see." He got up and went to the *kraals* to see his beasts.

"So you're back," Smitty said when Jarrold and Fanshaw came a few weeks later. "What do you want now?"

"We're going to take a chance," Jarrold said. "We're going to speculate."

"You are mad. You are reckless men."

"We're sportsmen," Jarrold said. "It's a gamble but we'll buy."

"Only the mineral rights, remember," Smitty said.

"*Ja*, the mineral rights. Bring the gold, Fanshaw."

He went out and came back with a boy to carry the little bags. It took three trips to the cart.

"The gold," Jarrold said. "Ten thousand golden sovereigns and we have the deed. I will read it to you."

The deed was plain and straightforward. It stated that Johannes Smit ceded the mineral rights to John Creswell Fanshaw for the sum of ten thousand pounds, to be paid in gold.

"Nella!" Smitty shouted. "Come here!" He put the paper into her hands. "Read it," he said. "Read it aloud."

"You do not trust us?"

"*Meneer*," he said, "trust is a big word. I trust you, but since I have no letters, and since you draw up the contract, it seems just to me that one of my blood should read it also. Read, girl."

Nella read. It was correct.

"Now we will count the gold," Jan said. They began to empty the bags one at a time on the table while they counted. Each heap, as he counted it, was pushed into an empty flour bag, except for one sovereign which was kept out as a check. At last it was done. Smitty counted the single coins. There were ten of them. "Ten thousand pounds," he said. "Now I will sign. Bring the quill and the ink, Nella."

"Sign here," Jarrold said. Smitty signed his name, Jan Smit, with immense care, and very large. "I do not like to sign," he said, "but I can see no danger in this. A man taught me to sign," he said. "A stranger passing this way who was held up by a storm. It took almost a day before he was satisfied."

He looked at his signature with pride, and drew a thick line under it.

"Now we will sign, with the girl as a witness," Jarrold said.

The others signed. Jarrold put the deed into his pocket.

"Now," Smitty said, "we will have a glass of *dop*. On an

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occasion like this, one should drink to the success of one's venture, should one not, *Meneer* Jarrold ? "

Smitty poured the brandy and raised his glass. " To success," he said. " And now you can prospect."

" We are in no hurry," Jarrold said. " It is just that we were afraid someone might get in ahead of us. You can't keep something like that quiet. And now we must be going."

Smitty watched them drive off.

Ja, he thought, till we meet again.

The next day, Smitty put on his best Sunday suit, and told Nella to put on her pink dress and pink *kappie*. " Like a rose you are, my fair one," he said. " A pink, blushing rose."

" What are we going to do ? " she asked.

" Many things, my child. We are going to the bank with the money, which will come to you one day. After that I have some private business to do, but you will be safe enough in Frikkie's hands till I come back."

" Frikkie ? " she said, blushing. " Oh that Frikkie ! You are going to leave me alone with him ? "

" With him and his ma," her uncle said.

" Oh," she said, " you are a very wicked uncle."

" I am a very clever one," Smitty said.

" Uncle," she said, " I do not understand what has been going on—with Jarrold, I mean."

" *Nee*, you do not understand, my child, because you have had other things on your mind, but the plan has worked. It is finished. Only the final nail remains to be driven and the hammer is in my hands."

" What do you mean ? "

" I mean, my child, there are no diamonds here. Jarrold and Fanshaw got a sample of soil from Frikkie Molteno, salted it with stolen stones from Swartpan, and on the strength of the sample they raised the money to buy the farm. It is not their money, my child. It is the money of many people who hoped to take advantage of a simple farmer. Nor did they tell these people the price was ten thousand pounds. No, my child. They said it was more—much more—and the difference they put into their pockets."

" How did you know what they would do ? "

" I know because I know jackals. It was something Jarrold could not resist. When he knew no one could prospect, he hired Frikkie to get the soil from the drift. When he found nothing in it, he put diamonds into the sample so that they could start a company. Now they will sell out their shares before work starts."

" And what will you do, Uncle ? "

" We will go to the police, and they will find stones in Jarrold's

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possession which he cannot explain. And then he will pay the price. Then he will go to work on the breakwater at Cape Town with the others of his kind : the other crooked diamond buyers. *Ja*," he said, " I knew that if I gave him enough rope, he'd hang himself."

When they reached the *dorp*, he pulled up at *Mevrou* Coetzee's.

" I thought we were going to the bank," Nella said.

" I am going to the bank, but first I have business here, and you, my girl, will wait for me at Frikkie's house. If he is not there, wait with his ma, and tell her to send for him. Say that I am coming."

Selina Coetzee was pleased to see him. " You thought you would catch me with my house in disorder and my hair in curlers."

" No," he said, " I have come to take you for a drive. I have something in the cart that you must see. Come," he said. " Put on your *kappie* and come to the bank with me."

They drove to the bank, and, leaving her, he went in and returned with the manager and two boys.

" There," he said, pointing to the back of the cart.

" What have you got ? " Selina asked.

" Gold," he said.

They unloaded the bags of gold. Selina stood by his side while the money was weighed.

" *Magtig !* " she said. " I did not know there was so much gold in the world. And to see it weighed out like potatoes—that is something to see."

" Ten thousand pounds," the bank manager said.

" *Ja*," Smitty said. " Now we will go back to your house and you will make me coffee."

" You are a masterful man," Selina said.

" And now that I am rich," he said, " I shall be more masterful. There will be no more delays and no more talk. You will marry me, Selina. This is your last chance. If you do not, I will find another woman."

" So it is I who delayed things ? I, who was a ripe fruit waiting for your hand to pluck me. I—"

" Make coffee," he said.

He followed her into the kitchen. " When we have had coffee, we are going to the police," he said, " and then to Frikkie Molteno."

" Why the police ? "

" To tell them that Jarrold has some stolen diamonds."

" Perhaps he got them on Sterkfontein ? "

" There are no diamonds there. *Magtig*, do you think I have never washed out that ground by the lock ? "

" But you showed me diamonds, Jan. I told—"

He began to laugh. " *Ja*," he said, " I showed you my little *blink klippies*, and you told my secret. *Magtig*, I love you, Selina.

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To tell you a secret and not have you tell it again would be like expecting a hen not to cackle when she has laid an egg."

"I only told—"

"*Ja*, the *predikant*'s wife, and the sign painter, and the attorney Jarrold when he came to call and asked you about the notice board that was being painted for me. You see, my love," he went on, "that was something Jarrold could not resist. A diamond farm that could not be prospected, for ten thousand pounds. A free gift, almost, from an old Boer who thought he was clever."

"But if there were no diamonds?"

"He put them in for his friend Fanshaw. He got them from Swartpan. Many are stolen there. It would not be the first time a farm has been salted with stolen stones."

"*Ja*," she said, "I see." Then she said, "And Nella? How does Nella like the idea of your marrying again?"

"She does not know—and she will soon be married herself. To Frikkie Molteno, though she does not know it yet. Even now she is with him. And that, too, I arranged by setting them side by side a time or two, and that, with a young man and a maid, is enough. With older people it might take longer."

"*Ja*," she said, "it might take years. But we shall make a handsome couple."

"*Ja*," he said. "You are like wine—you go to my head."

She said, "I had many offers of marriage, Jan. I am a fine-looking woman. It would be foolish to be so modest as not to recognize the fact."

"Like wine," he said.

"A fine-looking woman," she said again, "with property in the *dorp* and money in the bank. But my heart was set on you."

"That was natural enough," he said.

"And I knew, Jan, that if I gave you enough rope you'd hang yourself. *Ja*," she said, "give a man rope."

"What is it that you said, Selina?"

"I said give a man enough rope, and he'll hang himself. That is what you always said. *Magtig*. I remember the first time you said it, and I thought: What a man. What intelligence, a heart of gold, rugged as an oak and intelligent as well. So few men are intelligent, Jan."

★*Stuart Cloete, whose impressive story, "The Writing on the Wall," appeared recently in "Argosy," was born in Paris in 1897, educated in England, and served for eleven years in the Coldstream Guards. He draws the distinctive colour and atmosphere of many of his stories from ten years spent as a rancher in South Africa.*

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FOR FEAR OF LITTLE MEN

"Apart from the man we're hunting," I said, "no one is deeper in this business than you"

by EDWARD BOYD

ABOUT noon the sun came through and flooded the moor with light. The transformation was amazing. One minute the world was so much mist. Next thing the heather glowed like claret and the sky was the kind of blue that hurts the eyes.

"That's better," said the little man beside me. His voice sounded as though he was rubbing his hands.

"It is," I said, "look at that view."

He turned slowly as though he did not quite understand. Then an odd cunning came into his face.

"Oh that," he said vaguely.

He stared across the brilliant landscape and I got the impression that its colour meant nothing to him. I mean that quite literally. His face had the peculiarly static quality one normally associates with blindness. Only he wasn't blind. I didn't know much about him but I did know that. Yet the emptiness of his eyes as he stared at that lovely country made me feel—quite irrationally—a certain pity for him.

"We'll have him in no time now," he said, and my pity vanished.

"Out for blood, aren't you?" I commented.

He came back at me like a fencer.

"He's a murderer, isn't he?" he asked.

"He's also a human being," I replied.

The little man smiled.

"Only by courtesy," he said. "Men who commit murder put themselves outside humanity. They don't become less or more human. It's not a quantitative change . . ."

"What is it then?" I asked. He screwed up his eyes and took his time answering.

"Every murderer kills twice," he said at last. "His victim—and himself."

"Could be," I said. "Personally I don't ride my logic that far. Or that high."

He gave me a slanting glance.

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"Perhaps you'd like him to escape?" he said.

"Not at all," I objected.

"You *want* him caught then?" he went on.

"Of course," I answered.

"Why do you want him caught?" the insistent voice demanded.

"Because," I said, "he has broken the law and no man is above the law."

As soon as the words were out I felt slightly ridiculous as people do when they are forced to face the triteness of their fundamental beliefs. The little man found no savour in my embarrassment. He was a logician and logicians don't go much on humour.

"Obviously then," he said like a judge, "my way is best. The sooner he's caught the sooner it's all over."

"True," I said doubtfully, "I still feel . . ."

"Sentimentality," he interrupted harshly. "You are trying to shirk your own responsibility as one who subscribes to the law that will hang this man."

"You can't insult me." I tried to be flippant. "I've been psycho-analysed before."

He ignored my facetious attempt at diversion. His long, pointed nose wrinkled contemptuously and he gave a high cough that was almost a bark.

"Our fugitive wouldn't thank you for that kind of pity," he said. "You offer him the compassion that mice get from cats."

I wish you could have heard the way he got rid of that word *cats*. It's a fine, spitting monosyllable at the best of times but the little man spat it out as though it had an actual bad taste. His vehemence startled me and I looked at him curiously. His mouth was working and his body twitched spasmodically. He noticed my astonishment and pulled himself together.

"I hate cats," he said as though that were an explanation.

I shrugged my shoulders. "You and Lord Roberts," I said.

After that, conversation languished. The going became tougher. The moor swung steeply upwards and the bracken was breast-high. The air vibrated with heat and the scent of bog myrtle made me drowsy. I was hungry too and my last meal was hardly even a memory. All things considered, I was hardly the relentless, hawk-eyed pursuer I should have been. I couldn't have cared less. The little man was probably right. Perhaps my feeling for the underdog was stronger than I realised. Perhaps it was just that there were so many other things to think about. Perhaps, too, I knew that any remissness on my part would be more than compensated for by the companion who panted uphill behind me. He had a one-track mind and at the moment it seemed to be on its favourite track.

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If anything escaped him it would be something that was irrelevant anyway.

I began to think about the little man. I did not get very far because the things I thought were all contradictory and cancelled out. He certainly looked odd, but how important was that? Lots of people looked odd and once the initial shock of their oddness was over the mind accepted them quite easily. That didn't hold good in this case and I wondered why. The little man had a thin, triangular face. His nose was long, slender and sensitive. His eyes slanted without being oriental. The line of his mouth stretched too far in the direction of cruelty. His hair was thick, auburn and well cared for. All that added up to oddness but hardly the type that etched deeply into the mind.

I thought of the little man from the mental angle. There again nothing emerged. Admittedly he had a faculty of uncomfortable statement but that was because he had too much logic. He took everything one said—simple, profound, or merely fatuous—and put it through the same mathematical mangle. He favoured the Socratic method of question and answer. After a few hours in his company I didn't favour it any more.

Having drawn a complete blank I dismissed the problem of the little man. I began to take stock of my surroundings. This was a more productive line, for when the manhunt was over the story still remained to be written. I was the only newspaperman there. I had the field all to myself and the realisation had a certain sharp relish. Somewhere there was an editor who didn't know that the biggest scoop for years was in process of being dropped into his lap.

This prophetic thought brought the little man back into the reckoning. If it had not been for him, I told myself, I would have known nothing about this business. I pushed him firmly into the background and concentrated on absorbing local colour. Away to the left I could see the line of police beating forward through the bracken. Some of them were only black dots that moved with the same sense of related purpose as the visible parts of a machine. Then, suddenly, a whistle shrilled. The black dots bobbed, wavered and disappeared one by one as the search party sank down to rest.

I lowered myself gratefully to the ground. Sweat was blinding me and my leg muscles felt like a Turk's-head knot. I put down my coffee flask, opened my packet of sandwiches and bit deeply into one. It tasted better than good. I chewed meditatively as I watched the little man approach. He wasn't doing so well. His face was grey and he was panting, a queer, open-mouthed

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sound. He came up to where I sat and looked at me enquiringly.

" What's wrong now ? " he demanded.

I glanced up at him. From my worm's eye view he was more peculiar than ever.

" Break for refreshment," I said through a mouthful of sandwich.

He crashed his right fist into the palm of his left hand.

" Always the same," he shouted angrily. " No sooner do things get moving than it's time to stop. Time for tea. Time for coffee. Time to rest."

" What do you want them to do ? " I demanded. " Press on regardless ? "

" They've got a job to do, haven't they ? " he said.

" They have," I agreed. " And they're experts. They know how many rests make five."

" Why rest at all ? " The little man was fuming now. He strode jerkily forward, fighting for breath. His fatigue was obvious, yet there was no sign of perspiration on his features.

" Because," I told him, " they know that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. And they know that Jack can't be dull if he's chasing a killer."

He gave me a bitter glance but said nothing. I didn't mind that glance. I was so pleased at having finally scored off the little man. A small emotion, I admit. But then he had been cuffing me round pretty logically since early morning. " Have some coffee," I said by way of making amends.

He shook his head. " I prefer water," he said coldly.

" Help yourself," I said without rancour. " There's a burn laid on for you."

He whirled away pettishly to the burn. He flung himself down full length, immersed his face in the water and began to lap it up like a dog. I watched without surprise. It was not my own particular technique of drinking from a burn, but no doubt the little man had about a thousand good reasons to justify his method. He raised his head and shook it from side to side, scattering a bright shower of wetness. Then he got up and started to pace impatiently to and fro, his hands behind his back. Suddenly a wicked idea hit me hard.

" What's your name ? " I asked.

He stared at me as though I were a half-wit.

" I've already told you," he said distantly. The strange cunning was back on his face.

" I forget things," I said easily, and he curled his lip.

" You shouldn't in your job," he sneered.

I smiled annoyingly.

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" How you must hate this bloke we're after," I said as though to myself.

He whipped round like a cornered animal.

" I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

" Come off it," I scoffed. " How well do you know him ? "

His eyes were very tight and very hostile. For an idiotic moment I thought he was about to jump at me. Then he straightened up and smiled.

" I know him as well as . . ." He paused.

" As well as what ? " I said eagerly. His smile became an insult.

" As well as most people," he concluded. " After all he has a certain celebrity."

That was true enough. When this story broke there would be no lack of photographs of the murderer. Every newspaper office in the country had him tucked away safely in its files.

There were pictures of him beside the biggest tunny ever dragged out of the sea. Pictures of him with his foot on the largest tiger ever shot. Pictures of him standing negligently beside an elephant not quite as big as a house. Inevitably there were also pictures of him as Master of foxhounds. During one fantastic season he had led a well-known hunt. Under his leadership it had practically decimated the fox population of a shire. " Nimrod the Hunter," I said. " Now he's seeing how the other half likes it. Ironical, isn't it ? "

The little man's smile did not reach his eyes.

" Logical," he said, and I flinched at the word. " The man lived only for slaughter. Therefore the development was inevitable. First of all birds. Then the lower animals. Then finally one of his own kind."

I regarded him thoughtfully.

" Neat," I said. " You don't by any chance hold very strong views on blood sports ? "

" No," he said mockingly, " I'm not even a vegetarian."

The statement was somehow significant, but I couldn't quite grasp its significance and that irritated me.

" Amusing," I said, " but irrelevant. You still haven't answered my question."

" I don't see the point of it," he replied. He had recovered all his old assurance.

" I'll break it down for you," I said patiently. " The point is this. Apart from the man we're hunting, no one is deeper in this business than you. You raised the alarm so that the crime was discovered earlier than it might have been. You set the bloke out there on the run. You told the police you'd seen him here on the

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moor when they didn't know where he was. You came to the hotel where I was on holiday and told me all about it. What does that add up to?"

The little man drew himself up.

"Certain facts came to my knowledge," he replied stiffly. "How they did so concerns the police, not you. Apparently they are satisfied. I merely acted like any responsible citizen."

"Most responsible citizens," I remarked, "are not that responsible."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Then they are not responsible at all," he said. "Responsibility means . . ."

"Let us not become legalistic," I said, trying to keep my voice cool. The little man smiled.

"In the circumstances," he said, "one can hardly avoid it."

I regarded him distastefully and threw away a crust. Both gesture and look were wasted. The little man had resumed his pacing to and fro and every movement was jagged with impatience. Back and forward he went as regularly, if not as smoothly, as the pendulum of a clock.

"Why don't the fools hurry?" he burst out. "Can't they see that the weather is going to break?"

I stared up at a sky that was flawless. Then I stared at the little man.

"Your rheumatism doesn't agree with mine," I said sarcastically, and at that moment the whistle shrilled again. I rose to my feet and saw the black dots rising from the bracken. As they moved into position they looked like beads on an eccentric string. The hunt was on again.

We plodded on for about an hour. It was warmer than ever now but with a difference. The flawless sky had a discoloured look and thunder rolled faintly round the rim of the horizon. Now and again large drops of rain hissed down spitefully.

"One for you," I said to the little man.

He made no reply, gave no indication that he had even heard. He pushed ahead grimly and there was something in his concentration that was rather frightening. Around us, the sky grew darker and darker. Something that was neither a wind nor a breeze but more of a cold shudder shook the atmosphere. Then the storm broke. A sheet of lightning tore the sky to pieces. There was a magnificent crash of thunder. After that there was a kind of shocked pause and then the rain came. It came with a whoosh, like the blast of a bomb, and it stayed that way.

I have never known such rain. It was brutal. It had something

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in it that was almost consciously vindictive. It soaked and battered, then came back to soak and batter again. It flattened the bracken and churned the earth into pulpy mud. And all the time, behind it, growling encouragement, was the constant crashing thunder. I bent against the lashing wet and followed the little man.

The storm seemed to make no difference to him as he picked his way sure-footedly along. For the first time I felt almost glad of him. In that deafening, overwhelming din he was at least company. He went thrashing ahead, his earlier tiredness gone, and once I even thought I heard him humming to himself. I couldn't be sure though. I was too busy stumbling, falling, picking myself up and starting all over again. Then he stopped and raised his head.

" They've missed him," he said.

I gaped at him.

" What d'you mean ? " I asked.

He looked through me and his face was terrible.

" *They've missed him,*" he repeated. " *The stupid, blundering fools. They've missed him.*"

What he said didn't make sense but that wasn't altogether his fault. The world seemed right out of control and the storm had thumped me into something like idiocy. I could still hear speech but I couldn't unscramble it into sense.

" What does that mean ? " I asked fatuously.

The little man gave me an incredible smile.

" It means," he said gently, " that I shall have to settle this thing myself."

We began to race downhill, the little man in the lead. The landscape whirled around, a delirium of brilliant, spasmodic colour, rumbling sound, and, always, the brutality of the rain. Sometimes the little man would vanish from sight to reappear when the lightning flashed. When that happened he appeared gigantic and I got the sensation of falling through an endless nightmare. Then I would see him clearly and he would be as usual, a little man with superhuman endurance.

Most of the time I was too busy picking myself up to worry about the nightmare part. I was soaked to the skin. I had a stitch in my side. My head was pounding and my heart threatened to burst. Then mercifully the little man halted and waited for me to catch up. I stared at him and marvelled. He was not even blown.

" Get down," he said quietly. " We'll wait here."

Obediently I got down. The rain cascaded off the bracken and ran down my neck. I didn't care.

" When I say the word," said the little man, " you stand up and challenge him."

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His quiet authority made the thing seem quite normal. I nodded damply.

"All right," I agreed. "When will he come?"

"Soon," said the little man.

I can't remember how long it was before he did come. It probably wasn't as long as it seemed. Nothing could have been as long as that. Then I heard a soft, slithery sound, like the noise an adder makes as it slips into the undergrowth. I caught the little man's eye and he nodded. The sound became louder. Then I heard a whisper from my companion.

"Now!" he said.

He had worked the interception out perfectly. I stood up right in the path of a man who was bent almost double as he slipped through the bracken. He straightened up quickly and I saw the gun in his hand. It was a thirty-eight and he handled it competently. I tried to think of something to say but nothing would come. I stood there feeling unbelievably foolish. It was the man with the gun who spoke first.

"Get out of the way," he said.

I looked from the gun to his white face, then back to the gun again.

"No," I said stupidly.

"Get out of the way," he repeated, spacing the words out. I stood where I was, staring at him blankly, and he let me have it. There was a terrific blow on my shoulder that spun me half round and I remember thinking that being shot was not as painful as one would have thought. I began to feel weak and as I fought for control the little man stood up from his hiding place.

"Hello," he said pleasantly.

"No," said the man with the gun, and his voice was shocked. "No, *No, NO.*"

What followed after that is still a bit muzzy in detail. I can recall the little man moving towards the killer. I remember shot following shot as the murderer blazed away at the little man too. At that range I should have said it was impossible to miss, but the man with the gun must have missed, for the little man kept moving forward. Then he sprang and became a hurtling, brown streak through the air. Both men went down. I went down too. There was a crash of thunder, the world keeled over, and that was that.

I came to in the back of the police car. I bent forward and nearly fainted again. I straightened up and took it easy for a while. Then a voice said:

"Feeling better?"

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"A bit," I replied. "Did he get away?"

"No," said the voice, rather queerly I thought. "He didn't get away."

"Good show," I said. "Remember I'm first in line for the story."

"We're remembering that," said the policeman.

I felt better after that. In fact I began to feel downright unselfish.

"The little man all right?" I asked, and the queer note returned to the policeman's voice.

"We don't know," he said.

That made me sit up. "Didn't you find him?" I asked.

"We found you with a bullet in your shoulder," said the policeman, "and we found the man we were after—with his throat torn out." I began to tremble violently. I couldn't help it and I couldn't stop it. I was thinking about all kinds of things that had been odd about the little man and quite suddenly they weren't odd any more.

"What did he tell *you* his name was?" asked the policeman. There was an undertone of pleading in the question, as though he was asking for reassurance. The name came surging into my mind and I wanted to laugh. I checked the impulse for I knew that my laughter would be the wrong kind of laughter. I fought down my hysteria and tried to make my voice sound as normal as possible.

"He told me," I said, "that his name was Fox."

* * *

NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

During January, 1827, the following advertisement appeared in "The Times":

TO SCHOOL ASSISTANTS.—WANTED, a respectable gentleman of good character, capable of teaching the classics as far as Homer, and Virgil. Apply, &c. &c.

A day or two later, this reply was received:

Sir,—With reference to an advertisement which were inserted in *The Times* newspaper a few days since, respecting a school assistant, I beg to state that I should be happy to fill that situation; but as most of my frends reside in London, and not knowing how far Homer and Virgil is from town, I beg to state that I should not like to engage to teach the classics farther than Hammersmith or Turnham Green, or at the very utmost distance, farther than Brentford, Wating your reply, I am Sir, &c. &c.

JOHN SPARKS

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RAINBOW

—a Symphony in Colour

Among the Dazies and the Violets blew
Red Hyacinth and yellow Daffodill,
Purple Narcissus like the morning rayes
Pale Ganderglas and azor Culverkays.

JOHN DENNYS, 1657–1734

Flower Shops in Winter

These shops offer in mid-winter a synthesis of spring and early summer as the Chinese see it; to enter them is comparable to finding yourself in the fabulous flowery groves of a newly discovered continent, where all the flowers that grow in your own garden have been transmuted, through thousands of years of cultivation apart, into new forms . . . and invested with new and strange tones of colour . . .

Furthermore, by no means the least pleasure to be derived from visiting these caged orchards was to watch the real Pekingese customers making their purchases. First, they would walk round the shop, examining all its contents, apples and quinces, peaches and cherries with their heads in little rosy clouds or bowed under a load of snow, orange-trees, bearing at the same time their blossoms and their fruit, some of these glowing little lamps, others green-bronze and nestling hidden in their glossy foliage, and little formal bushes of button roses, wistaria plants, about two or three feet high, coiled and serpentine, their drooping fragile clusters the colour of storm clouds or an etiolate white. Having fixed his heart upon one particular example, the prospective buyer would then peer down at it for ten minutes at a time from every angle . . . haggling inimitably over the price demanded.

OSBERT SITWELL, *Escape With Me!*

Jewelled Ebony

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear . . .

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
Romeo and Juliet

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A Sort of Passion

I have been working on a canvas . . . in an orchard, lilac ploughland, a reed fence, two rose coloured peach trees, against a sky of glorious blue and white . . . You will see that the rose coloured peach trees were painted with a sort of passion.

I must also have a starry night with cypresses, or perhaps above all, a field of ripe corn . . .

VINCENT VAN GOGH,
writing to his brother, Spring, 1888

Fantasy in Black and White—

The rushes on the marsh are green
And in the wind they bend.
I saw a woman walking there,
Near daylight's end.

On the black water of the marsh,
The lotus buds swim white.
I saw her standing by the verge
At fall of night.

All the long night I lie awake,
And sleep I cannot find.
I see her slim as any rush
Sway in the wind.

I shut my eyes and see again
The whiteness of her throat,
On the black water of the night
Like lotus float.

Author Unknown, c. 605 B.C.,
translated from the Chinese by HELEN WADDELL

—And in Scarlet and Gold

Now the manner how the Indians kill the Mountain Dragons is thus : they take a garment of Scarlet, and picture upon it a charm in golden letters, this they lay upon the mouth of the Dragon's den, for with the red colour and the gold, the eyes of the Dragon are overcome, and he falleth asleep, the Indians . . . muttering secretly words of Incantation . . .

EDWARD TOPSELL, *History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents,* 1607

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The Flaming Tinman—

He wore a faded blue frock-coat, corduroys, and highlows—on his black head was a kind of red night-cap, round his bull neck a Barcelona handkerchief—I did not like the look of the man at all.

GEORGE BORROW, 1803–1881, *Lavengro*

—And Poppies Aflash

The blue wheat-acre is underneath
And the braided ear breaks out of the sheath,
The ear in milk, lush the sash,
And crush-silk poppies aflash,
The blood-gush blade-gash
Flame-rash rudred
Bud shelling or broad-shed
Tatter-tassel-tangled and dingle-a-dangled
Dandy-hung dainty head . . .

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, 1844–1889

Toilette in Crimson and Silver

Give me my petticoate of wroughte Crimson velvet with silver fringe . . . Where be my stockens ? . . . Showe me my Carnation silk stockins . . .

PETER ERONDELL, *The French Garden, Sixteenth Century*

Green, Green, and Green Again

Green, green, and green again, and greener still,
Spring toward summer bends the immortal bow,
And northward breaks the wave of daffodil,
And northward breaks the wave of summer's snow.
Green, green, and green again, and greener yet,
Wide as this forest is, which counts its leaves,
Wide as this kingdom in a green sea set,
Which round its shores perpetual blossom weaves ;
Green, green, and green again, and green once more
The season rounds its term ; then greenest, even,
When frost at twilight on the leaf lies hoar
And one cold star shines bright in greenest heaven.
But love, like music, keeps no seasons ever :
Like music too, once known is known forever.

CONRAD AIKEN

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A STORY ABOUT LOVE

The years cannot be hurried, more's the pity

by RAY BRADBURY

IN the spring of the year 1934, Miss Ann Taylor came to teach at the school in Green Bluff. That was the year she was twenty-four years old and Bob Markham was thirteen.

Everyone remembered Ann Taylor for she was that teacher for whom all the children wanted to bring huge oranges or pink flowers, and for whom they rolled up the rustling pink and green maps of the world without being asked. She was that woman who always seemed to be passing by on days when the shade was green under the tunnels of oaks and elms in the old town, her face shifting with the bright shadows as she walked, until it was all things to all people. She was the fine peaches of summer in the snow of winter, and she was cool milk for cereal on a hot early summer morning. Whenever you needed an opposite, Ann Taylor was there. And those rare few days in the world when the climate was balanced as fine as a maple leaf between winds that blew just right, those were the days like Ann Taylor, and should have been so named on the calendar.

As for Bob Markham, he was the boy who walked alone through town on any October evening with a pack of leaves right after him like a horde of Hallowe'en mice, or you would see him, like a slow white fish in spring in the tart waters of the Fox Hill Creek, baking brown with the shine of a chestnut to his face by autumn. Or you might hear his voice in those treetops where the wind entertained; dropping down hand by hand, there would come Bob Markham to sit alone and look at the world, and later you might see him on the lawn with the ants crawling over his books as he read through the long afternoons alone or played himself a game of chess on his Grandmother's porch, or picked out a solitary tune upon the black piano in the bay-window. You never saw him with any other child.

That spring Bob was in the eighth grade and Miss Ann Taylor came in through the door of the school room and all the children sat still in their seats as they saw her write her name on the board in a nice round lettering.

"My name is Ann Taylor," she said, quietly, "and I'm your new teacher."

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The room seemed suddenly flooded with illumination, as if the roof had moved back, and the trees were full of birds. Bob Markham sat with a spitball he had just made hidden in his hand, and after a half hour of listening to Miss Taylor he quietly let the spitball drop to the floor.

That night, after school, he brought in a bucket of water and a rag and began to wash the blackboards.

"What's this?" She turned to him from her desk where she had been correcting spelling papers.

"The boards are kind of dirty," said Bob, at work.

"Yes, I know. Are you sure you want to clean them?"

"I suppose I should have asked permission," he said, halting uneasily.

"I think we can pretend you did," she replied, smiling, and at this smile he finished the boards in an amazing burst of speed and shook the dusters so furiously that the air was full of snow it seemed, outside the open window. "Let's see," said Miss Taylor. "You're Bob Markham, aren't you?"

"Yes'm."

"Well, thank you, Bob."

"Could I do them every night?" he asked.

"Don't you think you should let the others try?"

"I'd like to do them," he said, "every night."

"We'll try it for a while and see," she said.

He lingered.

"I think you'd better run on home," she said, finally.

"Good night." He walked slowly and was gone.

The next morning he happened to be by the place where she took board and room just as she was coming out to walk to school.

"Well, here I am," he said.

"And do you know," she said, "I'm not surprised."

They walked together.

"May I carry your books?" he asked.

"Why thank you, Bob."

"It's nothing," he said, taking them.

They walked for a few minutes and he did not say a word. She glanced over and slightly down at him and saw how at ease he was and how happy he seemed, and she decided to let him break the silence, but he never did. When they reached the edge of the school ground he gave the books back to her. "I guess I better leave you here," he said. "The other kids wouldn't understand."

"I'm not sure I do either, Bob," said Miss Taylor.

"Why, we're friends," said Bob, earnestly and with a great natural honesty.

"Bob—" she started to say.

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" Yes'm ? "

" Never mind." She walked away.

" I'll be in class," he said.

And he was in class, and he was there after school every night for the next two weeks, never saying a word, quietly washing the boards and shaking the dusters and rolling up the maps while she worked at her papers and there was that clock silence of four o'clock, the silence of the sun going down in the slow sky, the silence with the soft sound of shaken dusters, and the drip of water from a moving sponge, and the rustle and turn of papers and the scratch of a pen, and perhaps the buzz of a fly banging with a tiny high anger against the tallest clear pane of window in the room. Sometimes the silence would go on this way until almost five, when Miss Taylor would find Bob Markham in the last seat of the room, sitting and looking at her silently, waiting for further orders.

" Well, it's time to go home," Miss Taylor would say, getting up.

" Yes'm."

And he would run to fetch her hat and coat. Then they would walk out of the school and across the yard which was empty, the janitor taking down the chain swings slowly on his stepladder, the sun behind the umbrella trees. They talked of all sorts of things.

" And what are you going to be, Bob, when you grow up ? "

" A writer," he said.

" Oh, that's a big ambition, it takes a lot of work."

" I know, but I'm going to try," he said. " I've read a lot."

" Bob, haven't you anything to do after school ? "

" How do you mean ? "

" I mean, I hate to see you kept in, cleaning the boards."

" I like it," he said. " I never do what I don't like."

" But nevertheless."

" No, I've got to do that," he said. He thought for a while and said, " Do me a favour, Miss Taylor ? "

" It all depends."

" I walk every Saturday along the creek to Lake Michigan. There're a lot of butterflies and crayfish and birds. Maybe you'd like to walk, too."

" Thank you," she said.

" Then you'll come ? "

" I'm afraid not."

" Don't you think it'd be fun ? "

" Yes, I'm sure of that, but I'm going to be busy."

He started to ask doing what, but stopped.

" I take along sandwiches," he said, " ham and pickle ones. And orange pop and just walk along taking my time. I get down to the lake about noon and walk back and get home about three o'clock.

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It makes a real fine day, and I wish you'd come. Do you collect butterflies? I have a big collection. We could start one for you."

"Thanks, Bob, but no, perhaps some other time."

He looked at her. "I shouldn't have asked you, should I?"

"You have every right to ask anything you want to," she said.

A few days later she found an old copy of *Great Expectations* which she no longer wanted, and gave it to Bob. He was very grateful and took it home and stayed up that night and read it through and talked about it the next morning. Each day now he met her just beyond sight of her boarding house and many days she would start to say, "Bob—" and tell him not to come to meet her any more, but she never finished saying it, and he talked about Dickens and Kipling and Poe and others with her, coming and going to school.

She found a butterfly on her desk on Friday morning. She almost waved it away before she found that it was dead and had been placed there while she was out of the room. She glanced at Bob over the heads of her other pupils, but he was looking at his book; not reading, just looking at it.

It was about this time that she found it impossible to call on Bob to recite in class. She would find her pencil hovering about his name and then call the next person up or down the list. Nor would she look at him while they were walking to or from school. But on several late afternoons as he moved his arm high on the blackboard, sponging away the arithmetic symbols, she found herself glancing at him for seconds at a time before she returned to her papers.

And then on Saturday morning he was in the middle of the creek with his trousers rolled up to his knees, kneeling down to catch a crayfish under a rock, when he looked up and there on the edge of the running stream was Miss Ann Taylor.

"Well, here I am," she said, laughing.

"And do you know," he said, "I'm not surprised."

"Show me the crayfish and the butterflies," she said.

They walked down to the lake and sat on the sand with a warm wind blowing softly about them, fluttering her hair and the ruffle on her blouse and he sat a few yards back from her and they ate the ham and pickle sandwiches and drank the orange pop solemnly.

"Gee," he said. "This is the swellest time ever in my life."

"I didn't think I would ever come on a picnic like this," she said.

"With some kid," he said.

"I'm comfortable, however," she said.

"That's good news."

They said little else during the afternoon.

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"This is all wrong," he said, later. "And I can't figure why it should be. Just walking along and catching old butterflies and crayfish and eating sandwiches. But Mom and Dad'd rib the heck out of me if they knew, and the kids would, too. And the other teachers, I suppose, would laugh at you, wouldn't they?"

"I'm afraid so."

"I guess we better not do any more butterfly catching, then."

"I don't exactly understand how I came here at all," she said.

And the day was over.

That was about all there was to the meeting of Ann Taylor and Bob Markham, two or three Monarch butterflies, a copy of Dickens, a dozen crayfish, four sandwiches, and two bottles of orange crush. The next Monday, quite unexpectedly, though he waited a long time, Bob did not see Miss Taylor come out to walk to school. He discovered later she had left earlier and was already at school. Also, on Monday night, she left early, with a headache, and another teacher finished her last class. He walked past her boarding house and did not see her anywhere, but he was afraid to ring the bell and inquire.

On Tuesday night after school they were both in the silent room again, he sponging the board contentedly as if this time might go on forever, and she seated working on her papers as if she, too, would be in this room and this particular peace and happiness forever, when suddenly the court house clock struck. It was a street away and its great bronze boom shuddered one's body and made the ash of time shake away off your bones and slide through your blood, making you seem older by the minute. Stunned by that clock, you could not but sense the crashing flow of time, and as the clock said five o'clock, Miss Taylor suddenly looked up, and then she put down her pen.

"Bob," she said.

He turned, startled. Neither of them had spoken in the peaceful and good hour before.

"Will you come here?" she asked.

He put down the sponge slowly. "Yes," he said.

"Bob, I want you to sit down."

"Yes'm."

She looked at him intently for a moment until he looked away. "Bob, I wonder if you know what I'm going to talk to you about?"

"Yes."

"Maybe it'd be a good idea if you told me, first."

"About us," he said, at last.

"How old are you, Bob?"

"Going on fourteen."

"You're thirteen years old."

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He winced. " Yes'm."

" And do you know how old I am ? "

" Yes'm. I heard. Twenty-four."

" Twenty-four."

" I'll be twenty-four in ten years, almost," he said.

" But unfortunately you're not twenty-four now."

" No, but sometimes I feel twenty-four."

" Yes, and sometimes you almost act it."

" Do I, really ? "

" Now sit still there, don't bound around, we've a lot to discuss. It's very important that we understand what is happening, don't you agree ? "

" Yes, I guess so."

" First, let's admit that we are the greatest and best friends in the world. Let's admit that I have never had a pupil like you, nor have I had as much affection for any boy I've ever known." He flushed at this. She went on. " And let me speak for you, you've found me to be the nicest teacher of all the teachers you've ever known."

" Oh, more than that," he said.

" Perhaps more than that, but there are facts to be faced and an entire way of life to be examined, and a town and its people and you and I to be considered. I've thought this over for a good many days, Bob, don't think I've missed anything, or been unaware of my own feelings in the matter. In some circumstances our friendship would be odd indeed. But then you are no ordinary boy. I know myself pretty well, I think, and I know that I'm not sick, either mentally or physically, and that whatever has evolved here has been a true regard for your character and goodness, Bob, but those are not the things we consider in this world, Bob, unless they occur in a man of a certain age. I don't know if I'm saying this right."

" It's all right," he said. " It's just if I was ten years older and about fifteen inches taller it'd make all the difference, and it's silly," he said, " to go by how tall a person is."

" The world hasn't found it so."

" I'm not the world," he protested.

" I know it seems foolish," she said, " when you feel very grown up and right and have nothing to be ashamed of. You have nothing at all to be ashamed of, Bob, remember that. You have been very honest and good, and I hope that I have been too."

" You have," he said.

" In an ideal climate, Bob, maybe some day they will be able to judge the oldness of a person's mind so accurately that they can say, this is a man, though his body is only thirteen, by some miracle of circumstance and fortune, this is a man, with a man's recognition of responsibility and position and duty, but until that day, Bob, I'm

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afraid we're going to have to go by ages and heights in the ordinary way in an ordinary world."

"I don't like that," he said.

"Perhaps I don't like it, either, but do you want to end up far unhappier than you are now? Do you want both of us to be unhappy? Which we would certainly be. There really is no way to do anything about us; it is so strange even to try to talk about us."

"Yes'm."

"But at least we know all about us and the fact that we have been right and fair and good and there is nothing wrong with our knowing each other, nor did we ever intend that there should be, for we both understand how impossible it is, don't we?"

"Yes, I know. But I can't help it."

"Now we must decide what to do about it," she said. "Now, only you and I know about this. Later, others might know. I can secure a transfer from this school to another one—"

"No!"

"Or I can have you transferred to another school."

"You don't have to do that," he said. "We're moving. My folks and I, we're going to live in Madison. We're leaving next week."

"It has nothing to do with all this, has it?"

"No, no, everything's all right. It's just that my father has a new job there. It's only fifty miles away. I can see you, can't I, when I come to town?"

"Do you think that would be a good idea?"

"No, I guess not."

They sat a while in the silent school room.

"How did all this happen?" he said, helplessly.

"I don't know," she said. "Nobody ever knows. They haven't known for thousands of years, and I don't think they ever will. People either like each other or don't, and sometimes two people like each other who shouldn't. I can't explain myself, and certainly you can't explain you."

"I guess I'd better get home," he said.

"You're not mad at me, are you?"

"Oh, gosh no, I could never be mad at you."

"There's one more thing. I want you to remember, there are compensations in life. There always are, or we wouldn't go on living. You don't feel well, now, neither do I. But something will happen to put that right. Do you believe that?"

"I'd like to."

"Well, it's true."

"If only," he said.

"What?"

"If only you'd wait for me," he blurted.

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"Ten years?"

"I'd be twenty-four then."

"But I'd be thirty-four and another person entirely, perhaps. No, I don't think it can be done."

"Wouldn't you like it to be done?" he cried.

"Yes," she said, quietly, "it's silly, and it wouldn't work, but I would like it very much."

He sat there for a long time. "I'll never forget you," he said.

"It's nice for you to say that, even though it can't be true, because life isn't that way. You'll forget."

"I'll never forget. I'll find a way of never forgetting you."

She got up and went to finish cleaning the boards.

"I'll help you," he said.

"No, no," she said hastily. "You go on now, get home, and no more cleaning the boards. I'll ask Helen Stevens to do it."

He left the school. Looking back, outside, he saw Miss Ann Taylor, for the last time, at the board, slowly washing out the chalked words, her hand moving up and down.

He moved away from the town the next week and was gone for sixteen years. He never got down to Green Bluff again until he was almost thirty and married, and then one spring they were driving through on their way to Chicago and stopped there for the day.

Bob left his wife at the hotel and walked round the town and finally asked about Miss Ann Taylor, but no one remembered at first and then one of them remembered.

"Oh, yes, the pretty teacher. She died not long after you left."

Had she ever married? No, come to think of it, she never had.

He walked out to the cemetery in the afternoon and found her stone which said, "*Ann Taylor, born* 1910, *died* 1936," and he thought, "I'm three years older than you are now, Miss Taylor."

Later in the day the people in the town saw Bob Markham's wife strolling to meet him under the elm trees and the oak trees, and they all turned to watch her pass, for her face shifted with bright shadows as she walked, she was the fine peaches of summer in the snow of winter, and she was cool milk for cereal on a hot early summer morning. And this was one of those rare few days in time when the climate was balanced like a maple leaf between winds that blow just right, one of those days that should have been named, everyone agreed, after Robert Markham's wife.

* * *

An extravagance is anything you buy that is of no earthly use to your wife. FRANKLIN P. JONES

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THE MAN AT THE WINDOW

He still remembered how, as he watched, he had roared with laughter

by NEIL BELL

LATE in the afternoon of Saturday, September 12th, 1685, Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys, but recently created Baron Jeffreys of Wem, arrived at Exeter for the opening of the Assizes on the Monday and the trial of the rebels taken after the battle of Sedgemoor the previous July. "King" Monmouth, the Whig puppet, captured after the battle, had been executed on July 15th, but was believed by his followers to have escaped to France; and was to have for years a legendary existence as the Man in the Iron Mask.

Lord Jeffreys was accompanied by Judges Sir William Montagu, Sir Creswell Levinz, Sir Francis Wythens, and Sir Robert Wright; and there entered the city with them, to maintain order, a strong body of troops under Colonel Kirke.

Jeffreys and his colleagues had come from Dorchester where they had tried over two hundred rebels: thirty had been condemned to death and summarily executed; thirty-odd whipped and fined; a dozen or so fined; perhaps a score acquitted; and over a hundred sentenced to transportation to Barbados and Jamaica. It is not surprising that so many received this last sentence, for each one sold in the slave market for something between fifteen pounds and twenty pounds, and as their bodies were the property of the King, a shipload represented a pleasant little sum for the royal purse.

It had, however, become customary for the King to make these bodies over to friends as personal tokens of his favour, and the bills of lading of transportation ships bore such entries as: Sir Harry Vernon 5 bodies; Lord Castleton 15 bodies; Lady Lucy Barton 35 bodies.

There came to Exeter city that day with the judges and the soldiers four other men of note: Henry Pollexfen, the prosecuting counsel; Charles Loder, Deputy Clerk of the Assizes of the Western Circuit; John Ketch, the Executioner and Pascha Rose, his assistant. The latter, like most executioners' assistants, was by trade a butcher —a necessary qualification, for to them usually fell the drawing and

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quartering, and unless this was done in a workmanlike manner, the crowd was likely to show its disappointment by hurling sticks, stones, refuse and ordure.

Jeffreys chose as his headquarters Mol's Coffee House, but his four colleagues went to the King's Arms. This arrangement, by Jeffreys' express wish, was not from any unsociability: for years he had suffered from the stone, and this torturing malady led him to a preference for the solitude of private apartments where he could eat, without exciting comment, the frugal meal which was all he could now digest. Afterwards he could lie on his bed with a bowl of punch of his own recipe, and slowly drink himself to sleep and surcease from the pain which racked most of his waking hours.

He was thirty-seven, but so much had pain aged him that he looked sixty. These long years of suffering were endured because he had never been able to bring himself to face being cut: an ordeal, swift by the astonishing skill of the surgeons, but yet so dreadful during its few bloody minutes that those who had suffered it were for all the rest of their days haunted by its horror.

While Lord Jeffreys settled himself in at the Coffee House and his colleagues prepared at the King's Arms for an evening's conviviality, Henry Pollexfen visited the prison and had a talk with the twenty-one rebels whose names were down for trial on the opening day.

After Pollexfen had returned to his lodging in the town, Deputy Clerk Charles Loder himself made a call on the prisoners. He said long afterwards that he was carrying out instructions given him by Pollexfen as prosecuting counsel. This Pollexfen denied. But whoever thought of the trick, it was Loder who put it into practice. He greeted the prisoners with great affability, told them he was their friend and that if they would follow his advice they had very little to fear. If they pleaded Guilty they would be admonished with harsh words but would not be punished, except in a few cases by a trifling fine. The King, he said, wished to deal leniently with them; and Lord Jeffreys had great compassion for them, but this he could show only if they pleaded Guilty. If they were contumacious and insisted upon pleading Not Guilty then the worst would befall them.

"You think you know," he told them, "what the worst is: to be hanged, drawn and quartered. But I tell you, my friends, you know nothing. It is a slow and dreadful death. I have seen it many times and always I have come away from the scaffold sick and trembling with horror . . .

"But, my friends, the law's vengeance has not yet done with you. It will follow you after death and wound you further through those nearest and dearest to you; for every penny piece you own, every

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brick of your house, every yard of your land, will be confiscated to the Crown, and your loved ones turned into the streets to starve or to sell themselves for food. I implore you to ponder all these things in your hearts and not by blind contumacy inflict upon your own bodies unbearable agony and upon those of your loved ones grievous suffering."

Three only of the prisoners turned a deaf ear to this cozenage. Two of them, young farmers named Thomas Hobbs and John Foweracres, said they were not guilty and nothing should persuade them to plead otherwise. The third laughed in Loder's face and called him a lying rascal. This was a young man of one and twenty named Christopher Hillary, the son and heir of Sir George Hillary of The Hall, Crediton. But Loder persisted, asking him again and again what he intended to plead, until at last Hillary contemptuously turned his back.

When the Court opened on the Monday morning at ten o'clock, the twenty-one prisoners were brought in and herded into a pen beside the dock. Eighteen pleaded Guilty and were removed from the Court to await sentence. John Foweracres was then put into the dock. He pleaded Not Guilty. Three witnesses (afterwards alleged to have been suborned) swore he was present at the battle of Sedgemoor bearing arms for Monmouth. He was found guilty, sentenced by Jeffreys to death by hanging, and immediately taken from the Court and executed.

Thomas Hobbs now entered the dock and Sir William Montagu asked him, "Well, sir; what have you to say?"

Hobbs, undaunted by the fate of his friend, answered boldly, "I am not guilty. When the battle was fought I was working on my farm."

"Have you witnesses?" asked Sir Robert Wright.

"Yes; my wife and my sister."

"Let them be called," the judge said.

"They are not here," Hobbs replied.

"Why not?" Lord Jeffreys asked.

"I would not allow them to risk their lives or their persons for my sake," Hobbs said.

"A pretty story," said Sir Robert. "Has the prosecution any witnesses?"

Two were called, who swore that Hobbs had fought at Sedgemoor; without more ado he was found guilty, sentenced to death, taken outside, whipped for his insolence, and later hanged.

Christopher Hillary then entered the dock and was asked what he pleaded. He leaned negligently against the side of the dock and smiled.

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"Stand up, sir," Sir Creswell Levinz shouted, "or it will be the worse for you!"

Hillary did not move. "I have only one neck," he replied.

The judge flushed angrily but Lord Jeffreys leaned forward, a faint smile on his lined sallow face. "What do you plead?" he said.

"I refuse to plead."

"Indeed. Perhaps you will tell us why."

"This Court is a mockery."

Jeffreys stroked his chin. "A naughty young man," he said blandly. And then he smiled again and went on, "And once upon a time a very naughty little boy, no doubt."

Hillary straightened himself in the dock and stared at the yellow, drawn face.

"What do you plead?" Jeffreys asked again.

"I refuse to plead."

"That is tantamount to a plea of Not Guilty."

"I care not what you make of it."

"No? That is very foolish of you. And wicked. Do you think your life is your own to throw away?"

Hillary laughed. "I knew you were a butcher. I did not know you were a canting hypocrite."

"Who informed you that I was a butcher?"

"My own ears and my own eyes."

"A pity they should so soon be deaf, so soon be blind. Remove him from the Court and bring in the rascals who have pleaded Guilty."

One by one the eighteen were brought in. Three were sentenced to death, taken out and hanged. Nine were sentenced to transportation; three to be whipped and fined; three to be fined.

The Court then rose for the day.

About eight o'clock that evening young Hillary, alone in his cell, was woken from a doze by the rattle of keys and the grating of the door as it was slowly opened. With the turnkey was a young officer in the uniform of a captain of foot.

Hillary looked over to him and asked casually, "Have you come to butcher me?"

The young officer smiled. "Not just yet," he said. "You are to come with me."

"To the scaffold?"

"As I understand it you have not yet been tried and sentenced."

"Is that any let to my hanging?"

"I am no lawyer. Will you please come with me?"

"And if I refuse?"

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"I must return for instructions."

"To whom?"

"I am not at liberty to say." And then, with a friendly smile, "I am a soldier and obey orders. Do not make it difficult for me."

"I will come."

They went up the stone stairs side by side and came out into the street.

"Where are you taking me?" Hillary said.

"To Mol's Coffee House."

"Why?"

"Because those are my orders."

The Coffee House was but a few minutes' walk from the prison and when they entered the young officer beckoned Hillary to precede him up the stairs and at the top knocked at a door with the butt of his pistol.

A voice shouted "Enter!" and the officer opened the door and gesturing to Hillary said quietly, "Go in. I must leave you now."

As the door closed behind him Hillary, his eyes slightly dazzled by the light of a score of candles on the table and in sconces, looked across to the end of the room where a quietly dressed figure lay on a sofa. It was some seconds before Hillary recognized the figure as Jeffreys.

"Well," Jeffreys said, "do you know me?"

"I know you as Judge Jeffreys."

"Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys, if it please you. But no more than that?"

"I do not understand you."

"You do not remember me?"

"I have never seen you before this morning in Court, to the best of my recollection."

"How old are you, Mr. Hillary?"

"Twenty-one."

"And fourteen from twenty-one is seven. Fourteen years is a long time when one is twenty-one. What would you say to fourteen years' transportation?"

"I have nothing to say."

"I was jesting. Are you hungry?"

"Famishing."

"How lucky you are. And your digestion is good?"

"It is excellent."

"What more could the heart of man desire? And with such a repast," nodding towards the table where there were cold meats of all sorts, bread and butter and cheeses, and several bottles of wine. "Will you do me the honour to sup with me? I have a

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debt to pay. Pray sit down. Forgive me if I eat but little—my stomach is not good. But I shall enjoy watching you. And afterwards when you have done full justice to your supper—did you say justice was an odd word on my lips?"

"I said nothing."

Jeffreys smiled. "You said it all this morning, eh? When you have supped, then, we will smoke a pipe together and I will tell you a little story. And now help yourself. Will it embarrass you if I watch you?"

"Not in the least."

"That is kind of you. I would give a year of my life to have your stomach for a day. I can recommend the wines. They are from my own cellar."

While Hillary ate Jeffreys said little, and except for a few mouthfuls of breast of chicken and a wafer of bread he ate nothing. He drank no wine but continually sipped from a glass of punch. He was restless, shifting his body every other minute, as if seeking a position of ease which always eluded him. Sometimes he turned his face away and his hand went almost furtively down to his belly.

When Hillary had finished Jeffreys said, "Come and sit near me; help yourself to tobacco. Let me give you some punch. My own recipe. An admirable concoction and one of my few friends.

"Fourteen years ago a young man went down from London to stay for a week or so in the West Country as a guest in an old house—a most lovely old house. He was a very young man, only a few years older than yourself, yet already he had made some little stir in his world. Young as he was, his health was not good; he slept badly and was acquainted with pain.

"It was the middle of December and he was to stay over Christmas. It was bitter weather with snow and frost. One night the young man had not slept at all. Towards dawn he got out of bed and wrapping himself in a cloak he sat by the window to watch the sky slowly lighten in a red and angry sunrise.

"As the outlines of the great house grew clearer, he glanced across the courtyard to the chaplain's house and suddenly remembered there would be prayers at half-past eight. It was already near the quarter. He debated whether he should go over to prayers in the chapel and decided, despite the discourtesy, that he would not. He felt too ill, too wretched. He drew his cloak the closer around him and sat there looking out of the window but seeing nothing, not even the angry splendour of the eastern sky, so deep was he in his thoughts. They were not happy thoughts.

"And then suddenly he came out of his morbid reverie to see something, something so odd, that despite the bitter cold outside

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he softly unlatched the casement and pushed it a little way open the better to see. A little boy, a very little boy, with a great scarf wound round his neck, his chubby face red from the cold and the sunrise, was walking over the iron ground, picking his steps like a cat. He walked slowly and trod delicately because he was carrying a bucket of water, a heavy load for such young arms. Reaching the door of the chaplain's house he poured the water down outside and then ran hastily off, yet on tiptoe, and presently returned with another full bucket which he emptied in the same place. He then went quickly away and did not return.

" The man at the window sat waiting. The icy air from without set him shivering but he did not close the window. Presently the clock in the tower chimed the half-hour. The chaplain's door opened and he came out hurriedly like a man straight from bed. He was buttoning his breeches, his gown bunched up in front. His foot went from under him. He slipped. He slid. He fell upon his back. His breeches came down, exposing him indecorously, and he ripped out a yell and a rich oath.

" The man at the window shook with laughter. He stood up and roared with laughter. He smacked his thighs and threw back his head and howled with laughter. He went on laughing. He wiped the tears from his eyes and was calm a few moments and then his laughter shook him afresh. He felt a new man. His wretchedness left him. Pain stood off from him. He forgot his body. He closed the window and turned to his dressing and ever and again he laughed. He hurried over to the chapel and prayed. Later he breakfasted more heartily than he had done for months. He passed a happy day and that night slept like a child. Slept as deeply and peacefully as no doubt did that naughty little boy. Do you know who he was, that young rascal ? "

Hillary laughed. " And you were the man at the window. But it is not strange that I did not remember you. I was but seven and I was kept in my place and not allowed to pester our guests. I don't suppose I heard your name and if I did, must long ago have forgotten it."

Jeffreys drew at his pipe. " A very naughty little boy. Did they beat you for it ? "

" They never knew. No one guessed water had been thrown down." He laughed. " The ice was an act of God."

" It did me more good than a hundred doctors. I have never forgotten it. And so the naughty little boy has become the naughty young man. What will you plead in Court tomorrow ? "

" I shall refuse to plead."

Jeffreys smiled. " Still contumacious. I have no doubt that you fought for Monmouth at Sedgemoor. A boy who would do

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that to his father's chaplain was bound to grow up a rebel. How far is it to Crediton ? "

" About eight miles."

Jeffreys glanced at his watch. " What time does your father retire for the night ? "

" Usually at eleven."

" But not tonight. He would get little sleep. I should think he is fond of you."

Hillary flushed. " He is the best of fathers. I am very fond of him."

" And you would break his heart."

Hillary was silent and Jeffreys said, " There is a horse saddled and waiting for you outside. Ride fast and tell your father that Lord Jeffreys has pardoned you." He held out his hand. " Good-bye. Do not thank me. I am in your debt. And now be off with you."

As Hillary reached the door Jeffreys said, " A word of advice to you. Never drink Burgundy with fish and if you eat lettuce with a meal, drink no wine at all. So you will keep your stomach sweet and avoid those ills which make life a torment."

* * *

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

General Alfred Gruenther, General Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, recently told the story of a member of the Soviet buying commission during the last war who was shown round a motor factory in Detroit. Approaching one worker at the end of the tour, the Russian asked : " Are you a Communist or a capitalist ? " When the worker emphatically declared that he was a capitalist the Russian asked why.

" Well," said the worker, " it's this way. When you leave the works at night one of the bosses can stop and say : ' Have a drink.' You go along with him in his big black Cadillac to a hotel bar and then after several drinks he says : ' It's too late to go home. Stay to dinner.'

" You stay for dinner and it gets so late you spend the night in the hotel. Next morning there is a lovely big breakfast. After that you drive back to the works in the big Cadillac and that's why I'm a capitalist."

The astonished Russian asked : " But tell me, my friend, has it ever happened to you ? "

" No," the man said, " but it's happened several times to my sister."

PETERBOROUGH, *The Daily Telegraph*

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THE WESTERN ISLANDS

"That's the party I got to kiss," said Jerry, when he saw the queen

by JOHN MASEFIELD

"ONCE there were two sailors; and one of them was Joe, and the other one was Jerry, and they were fishermen. And they'd a young apprentice-feller, and his name was Jim. And Joe was a great one for his pot, and Jerry was a wonder at his pipe; and Jim did all the work, and both of them banged him. So one time Joe and Jerry were in the beerhouse, and there was a young parson there, telling the folks about foreign things, about plants and that.

"'Ah,' he says, 'what wonders there are in the west.'

"'What sort of wonders, begging your pardon, sir,' says Joe. 'What sort of wonders might them be?'

"'Why, all sorts of wonders,' says the parson. 'Why, in the west,' he says, 'there's things you wouldn't believe. No, you wouldn't believe; not till you'd seen them,' he says. 'There's diamonds growing on the trees. And great, golden, glittering pearls as common as pea-straw. And there's islands in the west. Ah, I could tell you of them. Islands? I rather guess there's islands. None of your Isles of Man. None of your Alderney and Sark. Not in them seas.'

"'What sort of islands might they be, begging your pardon, sir?' says Jerry.

"'Why,' he says (the parson feller says), '*Islands*. Islands as big as Spain. Islands with rivers of rum and streams of sarsaparilla. And none of your roses. Rubies and ame-thynes is all the roses grows in them parts. With golden stalks to them, and big diamond sticks to them, and the taste of pork-crackling if you eat them. They're the sort of roses to have in your area,' he says.

"'And what else might there be in them parts, begging your pardon, sir?' says Joe.

"'Why,' he says, this parson says, 'there's wonders. There's not only wonders but miracles. And not only miracles, but sperrits.'

"'What sort of sperrits might they be, begging your pardon?' says Jerry. 'Are they rum and that?'

"'When I says sperrits,' says the parson feller, 'I mean ghosts.'

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"'Of course ye do,' says Joe.

"'Yes, ghosts,' says the parson. 'And by ghosts I mean sperrits. And by sperrits I mean white things. And by white things I mean things as turn your hair white. And there's red devils there, and blue devils there, and a great gold queen a-waiting for a man to kiss her. And the first man as dares to kiss that queen, why he becomes king, and all her sacks of gold become his.'

"'Begging your pardon, sir,' said Jerry, 'but whereabouts might these here islands be?'

"'Why, in the west,' says the parson. 'In the west, where the sun sets.'

"'Ah,' said Joe and Jerry. 'What wonders there are in the world.'

"Now, after that, neither one of them could think of anything but these here western islands. So at last they take their smack, and off they go in search of them. And Joe had a barrel of beer in the bows, and Jerry had a box of twist in the waist, and pore little Jim stood and steered abaft all. And in the evenings Jerry and Joe would bang their pannikins together, and sing of the great times they meant to have when they were married to the queen.

"Then they would clump pore little Jim across the head, and tell him to watch out, and keep her to her course, or they'd ride him down like you would a main tack. And he'd better mind his eye, they told him, or they'd make him long to be boiled and salted. And he'd better put more sugar in the tea, they said, or they'd cut him up for cod-bait. And who was he, they asked, to be wanting meat for dinner, when there was that much weevily biscuit in the bread-barge? And boys was going to the dogs, they said, when limbs the like of him had the heaven-born insolence to want to sleep.

"And a nice pass things was coming to, they said, when a lad as they'd done everything for, and saved, so to speak, from the workhouse, should go for to snivel when they hit him a clip. If they'd said a word, when they was hit, when they was boys, they told him, they'd have had their bloods drawed, and been stood in the wind to cool. But let him take heed, they said, and be a good lad, and do the work of five, and they wouldn't half wonder, they used to say, as he'd be a man before his mother.

"So the sun shone, and the stars came out golden, and all the sea was a sparkle of gold with them. Blue was the sea, and the wind blew, too, and it blew Joe and Jerry west as fast as a cat can eat sardines.

"And one fine morning the wind fell calm, and a pleasant

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smell came over the water, like nutmegs on a rum-milk-punch. Presently the dawn broke. And, lo and behold, a rousing great wonderful island, all scarlet with coral and with rubies. The surf that was beating on her sands went shattering into silver coins, into dimes, and pesetas, and francs, and fourpenny bits. And the flowers on the cliffs was all one gleam and glitter. And the beauty of that island was a beauty beyond the beauty of Sally Brown, the lady as kept the beerhouse. And on the beach of that island, on a golden throne, like, sat a woman so lovely that to look at her was as good as a church-service for one.

"'That's the party I got to kiss,' said Jerry. 'Steady, and beach her, Jim, boy,' he says. 'Run her ashore, lad. That's the party is to be my queen.'

"'You've got a neck on you, all of a sudden,' said Joe. 'You ain't the admiral of this fleet. Not by a wide road you ain't. I'll do all the kissing as there's any call for. You keep clear, my son.'

"Here the boat ran her nose into the sand, and the voyagers went ashore.

"'Keep clear, is it?' said Jerry. 'You tell me to keep clear? You tell me again, and I'll put a head on you'll make you sing like a kettle. Who are you to tell me to keep clear?'

"'I tell you who I am,' said Joe. 'I'm a better man than you are. That's what I am. I'm Joe the Tank, from Limehouse Basin, and there's no tinker's donkey-boy'll make me stand from under. Who are you to go kissing queens? Who are you that talk so proud and so mighty? You've a face on you would make a Dago tired. You look like a sea-sick kanaka that's boxed seven rounds with a buzz-saw. You've no more manners than a hog, and you've a lip on you would fetch the enamel off a cup.'

"'If it comes to calling names,' said Jerry, 'you ain't the only pebble on the beach. Whatever you might think, I tell you you ain't. You're the round turn and two-half hitches of a figure of fun as makes the angels weep. That's what you are. And you're the right-hand strand, and the left-hand strand, and the centre strand, and the core, and the serving, and the marling, of a three-stranded, left-handed, poorly worked junk of a half begun and never finished odds and ends of a Port Mahon soldier. You look like a Portuguese drummer. You've a whelky red nose that shines like a port side-light. You've a face like a muddy field where they've been playing football in the rain. Your hair is an insult and a shame. I blush when I look at you. You give me a turn like the first day out to a first voyager.

"'Kiss, will you? Kiss? Man, I tell you you'd paralyze a shark if you kissed him. Paralyze him, strike him cold. That's what a kiss of yours'd do.'

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" ' You ought to a been a parson,' said Joe, ' that's what you'd ought. There's many would a paid you for talk like that. But for all your fine talk, and for all your dandy language, you'll not come the old soldier over me. No, nor ten of you. *You* talk of kissing, when there's a handsome young man, the likes of me, around? Neither you nor ten of you.

" ' To hear you talk one'd think you was a Emperor or a Admiral. One would think you was a Bishop or a King. One might mistake you for a General or a Member of Parliament. You might. Straight, you might. A General or a Bishop or a King. And what are you? What are you? I ask you plain. What are you?—I'll tell you what you are.

" ' You're him as hired himself out as a scarecrow, acos no one'd take you as a fo'c's'le hand. You're him as give the colic to a weather-cock. You're him as turned old Mother Bomby's beer. You're him as drowned the duck and stole the monkey. You're him as got the medal give him for having a face that made the bull tame. You're—'

" ' Now don't you cast no more to me,' said Jerry. ' For I won't take no lip from a twelve-a-shilling, cent-a-corner, the likes of you are. You're the clippings of old junk, what the Dagoes smokes in cigarettes. A swab, and a wash-deck-broom, and the half of a pint of paint'd make a handsomer figer of a man than what you are. I've seen a coir whisk, what they grooms a mule with, as had a sweeter face than you got. So stand aside, before you're put aside. I'm the king of this here island. You can go chase yourself for another. Stand clear, I say, or I'll give you a jog'll make your bells ring.'

" Now, while they were argufying, young Jim, the young apprentice-feller, he creeps up to the queen upon the throne. She was beautiful, she was, and she shone in the sun, and she looked straight ahead of her like a wax-work in a show. And in her hand she had a sack full of jewels, and at her feet she had a sack full of gold, and by her side was an empty throne ready for the king she married. But round her right hand there was a red snake, and round her left hand there was a blue snake, and the snakes hissed and twisted, and they showed their teeth full of poison. So Jim looked at the snakes, and he hit them a welt, right and left, and he kissed the lady.

" And immediately all the bells and the birds of the world burst out a-ringing and a-singing. The lady awoke from her sleep, and Jim's old clothes were changed to cloth of gold. And there he was, a king, on the throne beside the lady.

" But the red snake turned to a big red devil who took a hold

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of Joe, and the blue snake turned to a big blue devil, who took a hold of Jerry. And 'Come you here, you brawling pugs,' they said, 'come and shovel sand.' And Joe and Jerry took the spades that were given to them. And 'Dig, now,' said the devils. 'Heave round. Let's see you dig. Dig, you scarecrows. And tell us when you've dug to London.'"

* * *

MURDER MOST FOUL

Means, motive and opportunity—cardinal factors in the solution of a murder. But these clues will lead you, not to the murderer, but to his victim. Count one point for the corpse, one for the author and one for the source, making twenty-seven points in all. The answers are on page 143.

1. *"Dummy bell-ropes, and ventilators which do not ventilate," excellent devices indeed, but little did their inventor imagine that they would lead back to his own room.*
2. *Nothing could restore to his mistress, a sixteenth century Lesbia, this pathetic victim of an unprovoked attack, so she asked the rest of his kind to join in her mourning.*
3. *Superhuman agility combined with sub-human brutality were displayed by the murderer of these two unfortunates, who chanced to live in a most appropriately named street.*
4. *A respectable robber cannot allow any young man with pretty purple eyes to cast them upon his daughter, so, "He took a life-preserver and he hit him on the head."*
5. *There was a person in the bath, but a personage was missing; and it took all the efforts of an indolent amateur to trace their connection —in hospital!*
6. *A ghastly tale this, especially when imparted to an unwilling listener at a festive occasion—though it left him "a sadder and a wiser man."*
7. *In mistrusting lean men he wisely obeyed his intuition, but his foolish dismissal of the soothsayer's warning led to his violent death on the appointed day.*
8. *On his way home from Porlock market, this honest farmer was done to death by one of the most ruthless members of a family which terrorised the district.*
9. *He arranged his own funeral as a matter of convenience, but his friend and reluctant killer saw to it that the second time there was no come-back for this engaging but amoral racketeer.*

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THIS ABOVE ALL

Because I Love You—

Because you love me, the dull minutes
Become gold and sparkling, and slip
Through my fingers like fine dry sand;
The drugged hours stir, arise, and
Dance, flashing like kingfishers
Among the willows, brilliant and fleeting.
And the days run past us, laughing-eyed,
Because I love you.

DOROTHY REED

And Desire Your Loveliness—

What a surprise it had been for her! Having the same godfather as herself, Charles was, as they say, her baptismal brother. They had played together as little children, growing up side by side, and until they reached the age of puberty would go swimming naked in the spring along with all the other children of Musseau. After that, being her elder by three years, he had always treated her as a young girl . . .

It had happened all of a sudden the year before, at the Rara country festival during Holy Week. Aroused to a pitch of nervous excitement by the bamboo trumpets and the rhythm of a warrior's march which, at regular intervals, was punctuated by the low bellow of shining lambis sea-conch shells, the strident notes of whistles and the crack of whips through four whole days and nights, the young people of Musseau wandered through the entire countryside together. They completed a wide circuit and joined in the festivities at Bourdon and all the other villages of the area. At each place they visited they were wined and dined. They sang and danced . . . danced . . . danced . . .

The dawn of Easter Monday broke fresh and clear, and all the countryside still vibrated with the Dionysian tumult of this spring-time festival. The voices of the women, sharp and incisive as the first rays of the rising sun, pierced the deep chorus of male voices and rose high into the sky . . .

Irma's voice was the highest pitched, the most ardent. Giving her the cue, Ti-Charles for the first time looked at her as one will look at a woman he desires. His eyes were set and burning, but without the slightest sign of impertinence . . .

When morning came they found themselves somehow alone on the road back to her home. They were troubled and silent, but inside themselves the sweetest and most intimate bonds were forged.

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Bidding her good-bye at the gate to her home, Ti-Charles looked away, and then said in a firm voice :

" Tomorrow I will write your father and mother . . ."

She turned, and running like a woman possessed, rushed into the house, her heart pounding.

PHILIPPE THOBY-MARCELIN *and* PIERRE MARCELIN,
The Beast of the Haitian Hills

How Shall I Tell—

Mistress, what shall I tell for your delight ?
The tale of some wan vestal in old Rome,
Of swallows wet with Mediterranean foam,
And dream of antique poet on terrace white ?
Of forests where great tigers go by night
While hunters watch their fires ; of girls that comb
Their salt sharp hair, sea-maidens in the gloam,
Of faery isles in waters running bright ?
Shall I relate how robbers found a child,
And with big apples soothed away her tears
In the wild woods ; how once a song beguiled
The cold heart of a beauty even to tears ;
Shall I repeat sweet tales of some old land—
Or tell my own sweet tale, and take your hand ?

HENRY THORLEY

Of That Magic—

And, at last, bending further down to feel her breath, the beauty and sweetness of those lips could no longer be resisted, and I touched them with mine. Having once tasted their sweetness and fragrance, it was impossible to keep from touching them again and again. She was not conscious—how could she be and not shrink from my caress ? Yet there was a suspicion in my mind, and drawing back I gazed into her face once more. A strange new radiance had overspread it . . .

Trembling I bent down and touched her lips again, lightly, but lingeringly, and then again, and when I drew back and looked at her face the rosy flame was brighter, and the eyes . . . were looking into mine. And gazing with those open, conscious eyes, it seemed to me that at last, at last, the shadow that had rested between us had vanished, that we were united in perfect love and confidence, and that speech was superfluous. And when I spoke it was not without doubt and hesitation : our bliss in those silent moments had been so complete, what could speaking do but make it less !

W. H. HUDSON, 1841-1922, *Green Mansions*

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In Which, Above All—

I fill this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon ;
To whom the better elements
And kindly stars have given
A form so fair, that, like the air,
'Tis less of earth than heaven.

EDWARD COATE PINKNEY, 1802-1828

—Time Doesn't Count

ROZANNE : . . . If you were only an ordinary man—a solicitor or a stockbroker or an actor—I'd marry you tomorrow—because then I could go on with my own life and be myself—but if I married you, as you are—I should have to be somebody else—shouldn't I ?
NIGEL : What you mean is that you don't love me enough ?
ROZANNE : (*breaking down*). Don't be so cruel.
NIGEL : (*more gently*). Listen to me now—just for a minute—I love you so much that my heart aches every moment that you are not there—it aches, too, when you are there, because I want you so desperately to be my own—part of my life—for ever. I know it has all happened very quickly—too quickly to appear really reasonable, but the greatest loves in the world have become true in the passing of a second—Time doesn't count—in magic. I understand everything that you've said—believe me I do—more clearly then you realise. But I'm self-centred too—and I need you, so much more than you need me. If you were my wife you would have to leave everything that you have worked for—give up all your ambitions—endure a certain amount of social rebuffs from people with snobbish, common minds. You would have—later on—to run efficiently, a large house in the English country and another in London—give parties and receptions and open dreary charity bazaars—none of it would be easy and most of it you would hate—anyhow at first. You would have children, too—I hope—and have to look after them and love them and engage nurses and governesses for them—and the only compensation for all this would be that I should be with you all the time—sharing everything with you and loving you. Perhaps it isn't enough, but it is all I have. Will you marry me ?

(*Rozanne looks up at him. There are tears in her eyes.*)

ROZANNE : Yes, darling.

NOEL COWARD, *Operette*

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PAPUAN MAGIC

Every morning at sunrise Ramabu came like a ghoul to see if the watch still ticked . . .

by HUGH B. CAVE

THE watch hangs today behind a hotel bar in Port Moresby, alongside a picture Dorson painted ten years ago. The picture is one that led people to say he was "different," maybe a bit "odd." Nothing in it is quite clear, but if you look closely you will discover Dorson himself sitting blissfully, in rags, at a Papuan feast.

"The women had nothing to do with it," his friends will tell you. "Even then, that long ago, Tom Dorson knew what he wanted."

Perhaps. And perhaps not. To say a man knew, ten years before the act, that he would do a thing so drastic . . . yet it's not beyond belief. He was forever doing the unpredictable.

Witness the times he put away his paints and brushes and went off by himself, exploring, to be gone for months. Few men knew the South Pacific as he did. None knew more about the black heart of primitive New Guinea. Who's to say the painting was not prophetic?

But the two women come into it as well. Rule them out and the whole affair becomes too simple. Dorson was no simple man.

Where and how he discovered Elizabeth is their own secret to this day. Once a year or so, when New Guinea galled him, he took himself to Sydney or Cooktown or Thursday Island—wherever the mood dictated—and her path might have crossed his at any of those places or at some station between. A girl of her sort gets about.

In any case, it was a shock to Port Moresby when Dorson brought her, and an even greater shock when the town saw how wholly devoted he was to her. He was excused on the grounds that she was easily eight years his junior—and pretty enough, in a knocked-about fashion—and this was his first love affair.

It wouldn't last, they predicted. A girl of her sort would never endure the respectable dullness of a tropical port like Moresby. Certainly not with a man like Dorson, a rather hopelessly ugly little man who might bury his nose in a painting for weeks on end. Even the house he lived in was a drab little box far out on the road to Hanuabada.

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But, surprisingly, Dorson seemed happy. At least in a bewildered sort of way, as if he could not believe that such bliss was meant for him. For his birthday, five months after their marriage, Elizabeth gave him a watch, an expensive thing ordered from Sydney and paid for with pennies she had hoarded . . . or so she said, and so he proudly repeated. Then, soon after, the whispers started.

She had never been seen alone in the town before. Even when she came to do her shopping, Dorson accompanied her. Now, suddenly, she began to find ways of coming without him—not to the stores, but to the water front, where a disreputable shell boat from Thursday Island was laid up for repairs. And it was discerned, before too long, that the object of her furtive visits was the shell boat's captain.

Who was he? No one in Port Moresby knew the man or his background. The whispers, though, supplied many a plausible conjecture. Doucard was his name, and obviously he was someone she had known before Tom Dorson appeared on the scene. A former associate, perhaps. More likely a former lover. In any case, she saw him often.

How the word reached Dorson is not clear, but reach him it did, the night before the ship was due to sail. He had been working on a portrait of a prominent visitor, unaware of his wife's comings and goings. Informed of the facts, he must have gone home that night to find Elizabeth absent, and then walked to the town in search of her, struggling dazedly to balance his faith against the ugly rumours.

He found her. As luck would have it, he arrived as she was leaving the ship. On the pier she turned, holding up her hands in farewell, and Doucard, drunkenly boisterous, leaned from the ship to embrace her. She slipped from the embrace with a teasing laugh and vanished into the darkness by the pier sheds.

Dorson stood like a man in a trance, gazing into the shadows which had swallowed her. He went then to the hotel, where, in silence, he drank himself into a stupor. Long after midnight he stepped into the street, as if to go home. But he didn't go home. He disappeared.

Those who see prophecy in the painting behind the Moresby bar will tell you, now, that Dorson's affair with Elizabeth was only incidental. His retirement, they insist, was a long-contemplated act.

This much is certain: he knew where he was going when he left Port Moresby. There was no aimless wandering. By lakatoi he travelled directly along the coast to Deception Bay; by native canoe he journeyed up the Kikori to its headwaters; and there, alone, he struck inland into the mountains.

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The rest of the tale we have to piece together from information supplied by Will Jonas, who followed the same track months later, purely by accident. Believe it or not, as you will. The fact remains that the watch now hangs behind the bar in Moresby, and Jonas, though by trade a gold seeker, is a man of integrity.

Dorson, when he left the river, had only the clothes he wore, the contents of his pockets—including a notebook—and the watch given him by his wife. No matter. He was a self-sufficient man, able to live on what the jungle offered, and he had travelled that particular route before. All, at least, except the last forty or fifty miles.

His purpose was to put his past behind him. To find aloneness in a native community where the evils of civilization were unknown.

For three weeks he trudged on. He put the seemingly endless rain forests behind, and forced a way through the bamboo thickets of the mid-slope jungles. He entered the valley. He was probably the only white man in all New Guinea who knew about the valley. Will Jonas, who followed Dorson, was three days finding a way down into it.

Twelve miles long, this valley. Six wide. And all about it, sentinel fashion, stand tortured walls of rock with their bare knobs in the frigid clouds. People lived there, of course. Show your primitive Papuan a patch of arable land easily defended from his neighbours and, if he has to, he will tunnel to it through solid stone. But Dorson had no wish to be a hermit. Peace was what he sought. Forgetfulness. Not isolation.

" I'm Tom Dorson," he said, " come to live with you, if I may."

A risky thing to do. By the rules of the game they had every right to reply with clubs and have him for dinner. But something in the simplicity of his approach must have piqued their curiosity, for he was taken in hand, literally, and escorted to the community headman for judgment.

There were some two hundred men, women and children in the valley at this time, and the headman, Ramabu, was by all odds the most formidable of the lot. He was taller than Dorson, twice as heavy, with legs like tree trunks and with the mind of a ten-year-old child.

Ramabu swaggered up to Tom Dorson, walked around him twice, peered into his face and demanded, " Where do you come from ? "

" A place called Port Moresby, many days from here."

" In this place called Port Moresby you were headman ? "

" No," said Dorson. " Nor do I have any wish to be headman here."

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"You could not be headman here," Ramabu informed him. "With my hands alone I can squeeze the life from any man in the valley, you included."

"No doubt of it," said Dorson.

"I'll show you," Ramabu said, and wrapped his enormous arms round Dorson's middle.

Dorson must have thought it was the end for him. He didn't struggle, even when every rib in his body seemed about to crack. He didn't cry out even when Ramabu whipped him high off the ground and whirled him in the air.

The headman plonked his victim down again, and thought it a great joke when Dorson staggered dizzily about like a sick chicken. Obviously such a puny fellow was harmless.

"Make yourself at home," Ramabu said, in effect. "As long as you behave yourself, you will be one of us."

So Dorson picked himself out a bit of land at the far end of the valley, and began to build a house. It was not the best site available —not near enough to the river to be entirely convenient—but it would do.

Those first few weeks were idyllic, really. He had no time to brood. Timing his activities by the watch, he devoted so many hours each day to gathering nuts, fruits and roots on which to sustain himself, so many to working in the garden which would ensure him a steady food supply later and so many to labouring on the house. At night when he stretched out on his palm leaf bed he was a contented man.

Ultimately the house was finished, the garden planted, and he had time to go up to the main village once in a while to get acquainted with his neighbours.

They were simple people. Abundantly provided for in their spot of paradise, they had few irksome duties and spent most of their time amusing themselves. Blessed with an unending supply of water, they were clean and attractive. Especially the women.

Giri, for instance. She could scarcely be considered a woman, having not yet counted her sixteenth birthday, but she had a woman's ideas. She came shyly towards him one evening along the edge of the firelight, while he sat watching a native dance. He hardly noticed her until she was on the ground beside him, her cheek against his knee.

"Who the devil are you?" he asked, scowling, and learned her name.

"What the dickens do you want?" he demanded. And learned that too.

"No," he said emphatically.

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"Every man needs a woman in his house," Giri insisted. "Are you different from other men?"

Dorson looked at her. Her brown eyes were soft and expressive. Her skin had the full rich lustre of youth. And, obviously, she was determined.

He stood up. "Yes, I'm different," he said, and hurried away, hoping his abrupt departure would not be noticed.

It was noticed by one. Ramabu, the headman, threw back his head and laughed as if at a huge joke.

Dorson was not to be rid of Giri so easily, however. Next day she turned up at the house while he was sweeping. Framed in the doorway, she made a face at him.

"That's woman's work."

"I told you last night I want no woman here!" Dorson retorted.

"Your water is gone," she said. And, taking the bamboo container, she went off towards the stream.

Dorson watched her go and made up his mind to be absent when she returned. He had been toying with the notion of searching the valley for rare edibles that might be transplanted to his garden. This, he decided abruptly, was a good time to make a start.

But when he returned hours later, he found her still there, squatting like a wood nymph beside his stone fireplace.

"I've cooked some food for you," she said.

There, laid out for him, was a tempting display of yams and roasted water chestnuts, cassava cakes and star fruit . . . he was too hungry to resist.

She waited until he had eaten; then she said, "Why don't you like me?"

"I do like you," Dorson admitted. "But you're too young for a man my age." On an impulse he added, "Besides, I have a woman already," and showed her the words engraved on his watch. "See? This is her name, 'Elizabeth.' And this is my name, 'Tom.' 'Elizabeth to Tom,' it says."

Giri held the watch to her ear.

"What is it for, this thing?"

"Well . . . it counts the hours. It tells me when the sun will come up and go down."

"How?" she demanded. "By magic?"

"More or less. You could call it that."

Giri solemnly gazed at him. "This woman is coming here?"

"No. Not here."

"Then she is no good for you. I stay."

Dorson lost his patience. "Stay here? The devil you will You'll clear out this minute and leave me alone!"

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"I'll be back," she said, making a face at him, "tomorrow."

When she had gone, Dorson pondered the problem. There was but one solution. Determined as Giri was, she would soon tire of coming if she found the house empty and had only herself to talk to. Meantime, he could be putting the days to good use by getting better acquainted with the valley.

He learned much in the ensuing days of hide-and-seek. The valley itself, he discovered, was a good deal like a fortress. The encircling mountains were wickedly steep on all sides, and the one means of ingress—the pass by which he himself had entered—was dominated by Ramabu's village. Ramabu's people need fear no surprise attack by outsiders, but by the same token a man who incurred their displeasure and wished to leave would find himself a prisoner.

He learned, too, that he might be able to do something about his water supply. Clawing up the cliffside one day to investigate the stream above his house, he found himself standing on the edge of a major discovery.

Here the stream arched from a cleft in the rocks high overhead and fell straight towards him, and the foaming pool at his feet was nothing less than a natural reservoir. Bamboo large enough for a conduit—all he would need of it—grew reasonably close by on the mountainside, and the downhill distance to his clearing was not great.

But, though his walks taught him much of value, they failed to discourage Giri. Invariably she was there at the house when he returned.

He worked out a compromise. She could come every morning and stay until dark. His nights were to be his own. So, for better or worse, he acquired an adoring, soft-eyed companion who saw to his every comfort and laughed when he scolded.

But she was a woman. She had a tongue. And one day, inevitably, Ramabu came calling.

"What is this thing that counts the hours?" the headman demanded.

"Only a watch," Dorson said warily, producing it. "Giri has told you it's magic, I suppose, but of course you know better."

"Of course," Ramabu said, knowing nothing of the sort.

He looked about him. It was his first visit to Dorson's place and he saw, perhaps to his surprise, that the house was one of the best in the valley. Almost as good, in fact, as Ramabu's own. As for Dorson himself, he had filled out. The gauntness acquired on the arduous journey from Port Moresby was gone. He was still a small man, no match for Ramabu, but the improvement was

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noteworthy. Significantly, Ramabu refused an invitation to stay for supper.

Giri had been out gathering nuts, and when she returned, Dorson made her sit while he glared at her.

"You and your wagging tongue!" he scolded. "If Ramabu gets an idea I'm a sorcerer, he'll want me out of here! Are you trying to get me banished?"

She hung her head.

"I was a fool to let you put a foot inside my house!" he shouted.

For days, Giri spoke only when he spoke to her, and laughed not at all.

She knew now that Dorson was no ordinary man who could be won over with a sly smile of invitation. He brooded. The long walks he took were not solely for exercise, and the hours he spent in meditation were not hours of relaxation. Mistakenly she thought he hungered for the woman—and she wept for him.

After Ramabu's visit, Dorson stayed away from the village, hoping the talk about the watch would die down. To keep Giri's careless tongue out of circulation as well, he built a lean-to and ordered the girl to live in it while he tackled the task of enlarging his own residence to accommodate her.

This should have been no great job, had not the artistic impulse seized him. He laboured for three weeks and at the end of that time he had a four-roomed house complete with verandah; without question the finest structure in the valley. By comparison, the headman's residence was a hovel.

But when he informed his companion she might henceforth have a room inside the house, she shook her head.

"This woman in Port Moresby," said Giri. "You love her?"

Dorson, bone weary, frowned at her as she stood before him, slim and brown in the sunlight. He wavered, but was not ready to cast aside his one weapon of defence.

"I love her," he lied.

"But she has no love for you, I think," Giri said shrewdly.

"That's about the size of it."

"Then why don't you forget her?"

Dorson slowly turned his head to look across the valley towards the barrier mountains. Having lied once, he now had to lie again.

"I can't," he said.

"You're a big fool," Giri told him, and walked away.

This time she did not come back, but as the days passed and Dorson had only the ticking of the watch to listen to, the empty rooms of his big new house began to get on his nerves. He worked

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in his garden; that was no good either. Troubled, he took himself up the mountain to begin his pipe line.

That was a job! For more than a month he stuck to it, cutting bamboo, moving boulders, clearing brush.

He had few visitors. Now and then, someone came with a polite request to look at the watch, but no one stayed to chat. Their attitude towards him was wary, and his loneliness increased.

Never mind, he told himself. *When the pipe line's finished they'll come in droves.*

He was right about that, though first he had to go to the village and boast. For days then, Ramabu's people struggled up the cliffside to examine the installation at the pool and follow the bamboo snake down to the house. In the house itself, where the water spilled impressively into an open trough and travelled the full length of the kitchen before passing through an outlet pipe to the garden, they behaved so like children that Dorson had to laugh.

"It's real," he assured them. "Put your hands in it. Drink some!"

Ramabu came, too, and looked. And he went away without comment. Dorson thought this amusing also.

He discovered his error the following evening. The tone of the drums in the village should have warned him, but when he recognized his peril, it stood squarely outside the door.

Dorson stood up, his gaze passing in near panic from Ramabu to the others. His trim little yard was packed with humanity like a native market place.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Ramabu had a speech prepared. "I come to find out," he said in effect, "if a man who can build a better house than mine, and move a river to it to show his cleverness, can best me also with spears. Or clubs. Or bare hands. I have been headman here a long time. My people expect this of me."

I'll say this for Tom Dorson: he was a brave man. A lesser man would have argued, and might have pleaded. Having sized up the situation, Dorson paused only for a last look round the house in which for more than six months he had sought contentment, then walked outside. He hadn't a chance of besting Ramabu in combat, but he paced to the centre of the yard, halted there, and said with a shrug of resignation, "All right, let's be at it."

A murmur swept through the onlookers as they formed a circle about their headman and his victim. Even Ramabu himself eyed the waiting Dorson suspiciously. There had been a good deal of talk, remember, about magic.

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Tom Dorson gripped the earth with his bare feet and waited, recalling how Ramabu's hands had whirled him before. The waddling Ramabu came to him with arms wide, circling, and Dorson turned with him. The Papuan rushed and Dorson sidestepped, slipped, and was flung aloft.

But not whirled. Not slammed to the ground. Helpless in Ramabu's mighty grip, he heard a voice screaming at the headman to halt, and looked down to see Giri hammering at the Papuan's chest with her fists.

"If you kill him, the thing that tells the sun to come up will stop!" she wailed. "He told me so!"

Ramabu tried to push her away with an upthrust knee.

"There will never be a sun again!" she shrilled. "Only night and darkness!" She spun to face the crowd. "Make him stop! All of us will die!"

Ramabu did his best. But the people there in Dorson's garden had been working up to a mere killing, and this was better than a killing. They surged with the rush and roar of a released flood. Ramabu hadn't time to hurl his victim to the ground before, quite literally, there remained no patch of ground in his vicinity big enough.

Thus, a second time, Tom Dorson won a reprieve.

Not quite a reprieve, though. A day later, Ramabu came calling.

"We have some big fools in this valley, I think," he said. "If I were to balance a stick on a sharp stone and start it rocking, it would rock for a long time, but in the end it would stop. I think there is something like that inside this thing you call a watch, and eventually the watch will stop too. And the sun will come up as before. But you will not be here to see it." He took a broom from beside the door and broke its tough handle easily in his fingers. "I am a patient man," he said, and left.

The girl came. Dorson thanked her unsteadily and said, "I owe you my life, such as it is. Whatever you want of me, you can have."

"Do you still love the woman in Port Moresby?" she asked.

"No, nor any other woman." And, tired of the game he had been playing, he told her how things were with him, and why he could never again let a woman into his heart.

"Not even me?" she demanded.

"Not even you."

"Then I wish I had let him kill you!" she said. But he saw a tear in her eye as she flung away from him.

He was alone again, yet not alone. Unfailingly, at sunrise

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each day, Ramabu came to perform one simple task—to learn if the watch still ticked—and then he departed without comment. Like a ghoul daily investigating the heartbeat of a man on his death-bed.

Dorson found this amusing. Then not so amusing. Finally terrifying. Too well he remembered the awful power of Ramabu's hands. The ticking of the watch became more important to him than the beat of his pulse. He awoke in the night, listening for it, and could not close his eyes again for fear it might stop while he slept.

To calm his nerves he kept a diary, methodically setting down each day's thoughts and activities. He dated it from the day of his arrival in the valley and searched his memory to fill the early pages. It was an excellent diary; he was honest with it. But still he listened to the ticking of the watch.

He heard it as one hears the beat of a drum, a ceaseless drip of water. The sound was torture, but he dreaded silence. Had Ramabu been a man with a gun or even a hangman, he might have faced the future with the equanimity of resignation. But those hands . . .

He had always worn the watch on his wrist, but now, fearful of damaging it, he hung it by a loop of fibre on the wall near his bed. Yet he could not let it hang there undisturbed, even between windings. Time and again he took it down to examine it for the first trace of rust; to listen for the first tell-tale fluctuation of its song. It was a good watch. Perhaps good for years. But she had given it to him and, like her, it might be faithless.

Then Giri came again to visit. It was late one rainy afternoon, and through an unmended hole in the thatch drops of water fell like sand grains in an hour-glass. Seated on his bed, head in hands, Dorson heard a sound at the doorway and leaped to his feet.

She said, "I am to be Ramabu's wife if my father accepts the marriage gift. Do you care?"

"If you were my wife," Dorson muttered, "you would live in dread of being a widow."

"There are other villages beyond the valley."

"And how would we leave here? Ramabu watches every move I make. He will know you are here now, and will not be pleased."

She nodded absently, gazing with concern at his gaunt face and wasted figure. For days the ticking of the watch had tortured him; he had eaten scarcely enough to sustain life, and the change in him was shocking.

"A man and woman might climb the cliff by the waterfall," Giri said, "if they had the will to try."

Had she come to him two weeks before with such a proposition,

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Dorson might have been tempted. Not now. He was ill.

"Marry Ramabu," he told her. "Leave me alone."

A week later he heard the marriage drums in the village, and knew they would continue for three days before the feasting and dancing swept to a climax. The sound saddened him. Loneliness sat beside him.

He lost track of the hours. It seemed to him that he never slept, yet he must have, for Giri came to him with food and begged him to eat, and wound the watch for him—a dream, of course, for she would never visit him at such a time. But when he slept was a mystery. The drums and the watch tormented him seemingly without respite.

He tried to think, in his misery, where and how he had made his mistake. He had come to the valley in good faith. What had happened? How had he failed? The watch was responsible for his present predicament, to be sure; yet without the watch he might have died long ago.

If there was an answer, it eluded him through the three nights of drumming, and on the third night, when the valley was quiet at last, he fell asleep from exhaustion.

When he woke, the night was not yet over and something was wrong. Something or someone had crept upon him through the darkness and lurked now within arm's reach, ready to pounce. He sat up, straining to identify the menace. Its name was silence. The watch had stopped.

Dorson knew what he had to do, had known for weeks. Barefoot, all but naked, he went straight from his bed to the door, out of the house and across the yard. Daylight found him at the pool, winded and bloody from his climb up the cliffside. He plunged into the cool water, drank to refresh himself, and with a desperate backward glance into the valley began to climb in earnest.

They would see him, he knew. Frantically he dragged himself upward to be beyond reach of their arrows when the pursuit began.

There was but one possible ascent of that terrifying wall—the almost perpendicular crack from the crest of which, high above, the waterfall flung into space. It offered in the beginning only the merest toe-holds to sustain him, and invisible finger-grips for the heaves that raised his weight. Higher, it yawned wider than his spread-eagled legs, and with the far wall beyond reach he climbed by means of a dangling vine. It was impossible, yet inch by inch he lengthened the abyss below him and reached at last a ledge where he might rest. To thwart pursuit, he tugged at the vine until it tore loose and fell.

Then, looking down from this giddy perch through the glittering

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mist of the waterfall, now all golden in sunlight, he saw a commotion in the village . . . and something else.

Yes, something else, nearer. Giri.

Even on her wedding night she had slipped away to satisfy herself that all was well with him. Just as she must have done on these previous nights when Dorson had thought himself alone and despised and dreaming.

He cried out to her as she began to climb. No use. Had he hurled a thunderclap at her she could not have heard through the shattering roar of the waterfall. The urgency of his own need was forgotten. He himself was safe for the moment, perched beyond reach of any arrow or spear that might be launched at him, but for her . . . already the footpaths of the valley were alive with running shapes, and the seconds ticked her life away.

While he watched, she reached the cleft where the vine had dangled. There was no vine now; he himself had torn it loose. In vain she sought a substitute ladder, while below her, leading the pursuit, Ramabu appeared at the pool.

She had no chance. For those men who could impale a bird on the wing at that distance, she was an easy target. Dorson saw her sway backward to look up at him, saw her lips moving, shaping his name, as the first arrow gleamed in the golden mist. Then she let go and, with both hands upflung towards him, fell into space.

He could look no more. Rising on the ledge, he began his struggle again. At the top he stumbled away from the cliff's edge into oblivion.

Well, not quite oblivion. But where he went, what he did in the interval between his escape from the valley and his return to civilization, are secrets that not even Will Jonas, who followed him into Ramabu's domain, was ever able to solve.

Tom Dorson left the valley in September. There is no record of his thoughts as he fled from the cliff's edge—whether he realized then the immensity of his loss and the real tragedy of his flight, though certainly he must have, later. He turned up in Port Moresby the following July, a grey and silent man whose eyes mirrored an abiding anguish and whose ears were deaf to questions. He had come back, he said, to put his affairs in order.

That was ludicrous. He had no affairs. His wife, he learned, had sold his paintings, all of them, and gone off with her lover, leaving him penniless. Only his house remained.

He seemed not to care. He moved into the house and was living alone there when Will Jonas stepped into the hotel one evening with the watch and the diary. And at three in the morning, when Will had told his tale, some of the faithful went to fetch Dorson.

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The two men faced each other, Dorson incredulous, the gold hunter wary.

" This is yours," Jonas said at last, handing over the notebook. " You'll excuse me for reading it."

Dorson thrust the book into his pocket, unable to speak.

" You'll be pleased to know Giri isn't dead," Jonas went on, " though she was badly hurt and took a long time getting over it. Ramabu's finished—lost face over the affair and got turned out—and the girl's living alone in your house below the waterfall. I spent many an hour talking to her."

Dorson, white as the wall, held his gaze on the other's grizzled face.

" And I've brought your watch," said Jonas. " She gave it to me. Said you valued it." He laid the timepiece on the table, giving its stem a turn as he did so. " It runs, you'll notice. Never was anything wrong with it. She kept it running those last few days when you were near out of your mind ; then, when her pending marriage didn't shake you, she let it stop in desperation, hoping you'd leave the valley and take her with you. But you went alone."

That was the moment. The whole tale, of course, will be told in Port Moresby as long as there remain a narrator with a thirst and a hearer with money enough to anchor him to a bar, but that moment, brief as it was, will ever be the nub of the matter.

Whiter than white, Tom Dorson sat statue-still, the watch timing his resurrection, and not a sound in that place except the gentle noise it made while mocking him. Then all at once he stood up. Without a word for anyone present, he lurched about and flung himself at the door, and the door hung open behind him, creaking in the breeze, letting in fluttering moths that made for the lamp above the table where the watch lay ; but no one moved to close it ; no one stirred until the sound of his hurrying footsteps was gone.

Then, with a shrug, Will Jonas picked up the watch and went to the bar with it.

" He don't want it, it seems," Will said. " Might at least have thanked me, I should think. Well, I'll trade it for a bottle."

So there it is . . . the watch that hangs today behind the bar in Moresby, unwound and silent, but ready to tick whenever some curious customer eyes the picture hanging beside it, of Tom Dorson sitting in rags at a native feast, and asks a leading question.

The question comes easy. The answer's a different matter. The faithful, you see, will not be shaken from their insistence that the picture is prophetic—that Tom Dorson would have done such

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and so, eventually, no matter what. While those of a more romantic turn of thought . . ?

Well, never mind. One thing is sure. Dorson went to the valley this time with a clear mind and a clean conscience, not to escape from something, but to find it. And since it was there waiting for him, he found it, without a doubt.

* * *

SUMMER SONG

Hush, Muse ! and doe nott clammer soe,
Butt tayke ye playce along ye queue,
I muste awaye
On holydaye
As evenn poetts sometymes doe.

Awaye to Cornewal in ye busse—
I cannot paye ye traine doune—
And wyth mie packe
Uponn mie backe
Forgett civilisacioune.

Forgett ye fumey fire, forgett
Ye kychenn synck of dysshes fulle,
Ye holey bynne
For tynnes inne,
And mowe ye lawne, and weedes pulle,

But pytch ytente inn ye sonne,
And lye ye thyssle meadowe inne,
And shayre mie house
With woode-louse
Lyke anye wylde Bedowinne.

And heare ye gulle above ye cliffe,
Ybreakynge wayy along ye shore,
Ybeere drynk,
And doe nott thynk,
And soe remaine for evermore.

JOHN NANCE

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JONATHAN

"Be right funny to see children up there again," said the villagers

by GEOFFREY KINO

"*TO LET July and August modern house in lovely village of Quinton, Norfolk, four miles north of Broads, two and a half miles sea. Four bedrooms, three reception, all mod. cons. Linen and china supplied. Own electric power plant. Own grounds one acre. Write . . .*"

Pamela looked up from her newspaper and paused dramatically. Then, "David," she went on eagerly, "it sounds perfect for the children's holidays. We could join forces with the Napiers. Oh, darling, it would be wonderful."

I lit a pipe and ruminated, my mind at peace after a good Sunday dinner. Pam seemed to have hit on a good idea. Bill and Felicity Napier are old friends of ours and their twins, Stephen and Ann, get on with our two like a house on fire.

"Well," I conceded, "we might do worse."

That was all the encouragement Pamela needed. Next day she and Felicity drove down to Norfolk and found "The Grange" all that they had hoped for. By the middle of the week everything was arranged. Bill and I were to drive our families to Quinton on the first Saturday in July and from then until the first of August we would spend the week at our London club and join our holidaying brood for weekends.

In the late afternoon of the first Saturday in July two car-loads of rather disgruntled holidaymakers turned in at the gates of "The Grange". The rain had been pouring down steadily all day. Jennifer, our eight-year-old, had a cold. Our son Peter, two years younger, was still brooding over a farewell scene with his guinea pigs. One of the Napier children had fallen downstairs just before leaving home. And when we rounded a corner in the drive and found the ruins of a house confronting us it seemed a suitable climax to the day.

"Looks as if the blasted place has been gutted by fire," I remarked, getting out to have a look.

Just as I reached the edge of the gravel path the rain stopped and the sun broke through. In that unnatural sunshine the ruined

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walls stood out in relief, and there was a kind of menace about them. The very light from the sun seemed evil! And then, although the coast was more than two miles away, a nauseating smell of rotting seaweed was wafted across my nostrils. Had it lasted for more than a second I should have been ill.

It was Pam who broke the spell, calling to me as she peered from the car window, "Don't look such a misery. That's the *old* house, silly! It was burnt down about five years ago. You can't see the new one from here because of the trees."

I got into the car again without speaking, and by the time we had pulled up beside the new house I had almost convinced myself that the drains must be troublesome when the wind was blowing in the wrong direction.

"The Grange" was a fine house, though incongruously modern in so rustic a setting. When I rang the bell the door opened almost immediately and a neat little woman with her hair scraped into the shape of a cottage loaf greeted us. Behind her we could see a pleasant lounge hall. In the far corner burned a log fire and in front of it, laid on two low tables, was an enormous high tea. I could have kissed the little woman's prim smiling face. Beds had been turned down and electric fires gleamed in the two rooms allotted to the children. "The Grange" began to feel very much like home.

The following day Bill and I walked into the village in search of Sunday papers and a pint of beer. It was a perfect day with a light breeze ruffling the hedges. The sun beat down from a clear sky on neat cottages and trim village gardens. The misgivings of the previous night seemed unbelievably remote.

Bill and I quenched our thirst at the inn and borrowed the landlord's Sunday paper. The locals seemed unfriendly, but we thought nothing of it. We offered the publican a drink for lending us his paper and, as he drew it, he asked curiously, "You be the people from 'The Grange'?"

We nodded, and he said, "Be right funny to see children up there again."

When I asked him why he affected not to hear and as lunch time was approaching we left.

Bill and I stuck to our plan. The peaceful weekends spent at "The Grange" were well worth the inconvenient journey down to Quinton on Friday nights. On the last weekend in July we were sitting in deck chairs on the lawn, with the children safely tucked in for the night, when Felicity asked:

"Pam, have you told David about our fifth child?"

Pam shook her head, "No, not yet. I think it was just imagination."

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"No," said Felicity, "not imagination." She laid down her knitting and rested her hands in her lap. She looked at Bill and in her soft voice began, "Our children have made friends with a small boy. He doesn't seem to be one of the village boys—though he may be. The children talk of nothing else. It's Jonathan this and Jonathan that. The funny thing is that they never abbreviate his name as they do each other's, and they play all day long in the ruins; we can't even get them down to the beach. Not that it matters much, they're in the fresh air all day long, but it's even difficult to get them in at meal times."

"Doesn't sound like our young wolves," I said incredulously.

"Nor ours," admitted Felicity with a quick smile. "Oh, they eat well enough but they hate leaving Jonathan, and when we suggest that Jonathan comes in too, they just laugh and say, 'Oh no, he wouldn't do that'." She paused and I noticed how her fingers twisted nervously in her lap.

The sun was sinking now and the stillness of the evening seemed to lend an eeriness to her voice. "At first, Pam and I thought it was because his mother had told him not to eat with us, but finally we came to the conclusion that he didn't exist at all—that he was just an invention. You know how children are . . . But we saw him last night." She turned to Pam who was sitting forward listening intently. She gave a slight nod and smiled.

"We'd left them for the afternoon and gone down to the sea. They wouldn't come, and to persuade them would only have meant tears. We felt we must go for a swim; it was so hot. We got back about half-past six, and while Pam ran the bath, I fetched the children from the ruins. There they were, filthy dirty, all sitting round in a little group with their heads together looking at something. As I approached them I realised there was someone with them. It was an impression more than actually seeing a fifth person there. Seated with his back towards me in the shadows cast by the trees, he seemed to fade into the greyness of the ruins. I accidentally kicked a stone and Peter jumped up shouting, 'Hullo Aunt Felicity.' I said nothing and the four children trooped in behind me.

"It was only when I was telling Pam that I remembered something else. The little boy was wearing a lace collar. I distinctly noticed the whiteness of it round the back of his coat. You know the sort of thing I mean; little boys wore them about two hundred years ago."

She stopped abruptly and gave a nervous little laugh as though ashamed of what she had said. After some seconds had passed, Bill put into words what all of us were wondering.

"You don't mean to tell us you think you've seen a ghost?"

Felicity pushed her long auburn hair away from her eyes, "I

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don't know. Perhaps I imagined the whole thing. Some trick of the shadows after being in the sunshine all afternoon." But it didn't sound very convincing.

Suddenly she stood up. " I—we—Pam and I were wondering if this boy has cast some sort of spell over our children."

As I got into bed that night, I felt a faint chill at my heart. Felicity is such a sane person, and yet here she was trying hard to convince herself that she had not seen a ghost.

I was further disturbed when Pam, sitting at her dressing table, said, " You know, darling, it's strange about that little boy," and after a short pause, " —the villagers are a funny lot too. I think they disapprove of me, or I did ; now I think it's something else."

I smiled as I lay with my hands behind my head. Pam is a vivacious young thing and on holiday wears brief shorts and a shirt, scarlet finger nails and, more often than not, toe nails of the same colour. A recognised fashion at popular resorts, they would be liable to raise a little surprise among the locals.

Pam must have read my thoughts. " No, David. They're used to seeing Fel and me by now ; it was something I said. After I'd bought your beer, last night, I ordered a drink and asked the landlord to join me. He drew a pint and thanked me. Then I asked him if he knew of a child in the village called Jonathan. He put down his beer, gave me a funny sort of look and asked if I had seen him. Everyone in the pub was listening. Then the landlord suddenly leaned his elbows on the counter and said :

" ' Mrs. Barton, ma'am, there is a sort of legend around these parts that we don't talk about ; but blast it ! If your children have seen him, I think I be right to tell you.'

" David, it was quite uncanny, the whole pub came round us and when the landlord looked round there was a murmur of ' ayes '."

Apparently, before it was burnt down, Pam told me, " The Grange " was haunted by a small boy.

Some two hundred years ago, there was an outbreak of plague in the village. The squire and his wife at that time had a small nephew living with them, because the parents had been killed in an accident. He was a boy of seven called Jonathan. They put up with him but that was all. He was nothing more than a stable boy who had to work for his keep.

Well, this unhappy child caught the plague. The squire and his wife were terrified ; they didn't know how to get rid of the child and the danger of infection was present while he was in the house. One night they persuaded one of their men to drive the dying boy down to the coast in an old hay cart, and dispose of him at high tide. The whole foul action was carried out successfully.

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However, a short time later, the cart driver caught the plague and, just before he died, confessed to the priest his part in the deed. Nothing was ever proved, for the Squire, who contended that Jonathan had been sent to other relations, was far too powerful.

"Well," said Pam, "it's quite natural that the unhappy little creature would haunt the house where he had been so badly treated."

And as she climbed into bed she said, "David, I'm worried. You see he is never clearly seen by grown-ups because he is terrified of them, but he trusts children. They see him but we only half see him."

The whole thing was grotesque. I tried to find some words of comfort but all I could say was, "Even if the new member of the gang is a ghost, he hasn't brought them any harm."

We put out the lights and Pam lay in my arms for a long while before I realised she was asleep.

That week-end Bill and I nobly surrendered our usual round of golf and took our families in hand. We forced the children down to the beach on Saturday, and despite some tears at not being allowed to play among their ruins, they soon forgot, and spent a happy time on the beach falling in and out of the sea and getting large quantities of sand between their toes.

Altogether the day was a great success and we returned in the evening tired but triumphant.

As we were getting into the car, however, I had a fit of temper from Jennifer. She refused to get in, crying out, "No, you'll hurt me. No, I hate going in cars." This was a most unusual statement from her, because she loved motoring; in fact it was difficult to convince her that when I was leaving for the office she couldn't accompany me. I reminded her about this and after a while she calmed down.

The following day was spent by the children in the same way but with no early morning tears, and with a promise exacted from their respective mothers that they should return to the beach on Monday.

And that is what would have happened had Pamela not tripped over a toy left carelessly at the top of the stairs early on the Monday morning, and been whisked off to Yarmouth Hospital with a suspected fracture of the ankle bone.

Bill and I had already returned to London but when I got to the office my secretary greeted me with the news, and I was soon driving back the way I had come with far more to worry about than Jonathan. I found Pamela in the hospital, her right leg in plaster of Paris, pleading with anyone who would listen to let her go back to her children. Possibly the pain of her leg or her vivid imagination had by now worked itself to fever pitch and she was

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fearful of what would happen without someone around to keep a constant eye on them. She reasoned from her bed that four children were far too many for Felicity to cope with alone. They quietened Pam with a sedative and, after seeing her settled down and in a restless sleep, I spent the night at a neighbouring hotel.

The next morning I found Pam, her foot now plastered to an iron splint, testing her mobility with the aid of two sticks. The doctor had reluctantly surrendered to her pleading to return home, but only on the promise that she would rest the leg as much as possible for at least a week. Pam had readily agreed and with some help was planted on the back seat of my car and we drove back to Quinton. It was not a pleasant journey. I was worried about Pam's leg and she could think of nothing but the children.

A very limp Felicity greeted us, and then for no reason burst into tears. Life, I felt, was going to be gay with a wife incapacitated and an hysterical girl.

Felicity slumped into a chair.

" Jonathan's back." She flung the statement into the air. " The children played with him all yesterday. Oh, David," she turned to me, " that isn't the worst. What are we going to do ? It's Stephen. I'm worried about Stephen."

" What about Stephen ? " Pam was leaning forward, her hands clasped tightly round the handles of her sticks.

" I found him sleep-walking last night. He's never done such a thing in his life before." Felicity closed her eyes and then the words started to tumble out. " I woke up about eleven o'clock last night and heard a door banging. I was terrified. Like a coward, I could not move for a moment, but fear for the safety of the children made me get up and open my door, and there was Stephen just about to walk downstairs. I called his name. I know it was stupid but I couldn't think of anything else to do. He didn't even look round.

" I followed him downstairs. He went straight across to the front door, and was about to go out into the garden, when I looked through the hall window and there, standing on the lawn, was Jonathan. I could see him quite clearly in the moonlight. Tears were rolling down his cheeks. The whole world seemed to stand still. For a moment I couldn't do anything, and then I lost my head, ran forward shouting and grabbed hold of Stephen. He turned round slowly and looked at me without recognising me. I have never seen so much hate registered on a small boy's face. I think he could have killed me in that moment. So we stood looking at each other for minutes ; a shudder went through him, and he burst into tears.

" I comforted him as best I could, and got him back to bed ;

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he was asleep as his head touched the pillow. I went back to my room but kept the door open. I didn't sleep but just sat up waiting. Nothing happened."

She shuddered. " David, there's something evil here. Please let's go." She held her head in her hands and cried quietly, letting the tears run down her face unheeded.

For a moment reason left the three of us. Pam's face was chalk-white under the tan, and I felt fear prickling my spine.

Then I looked out of the window, and heard, coming from the direction of the ruins, the laughter of the children. The water sprinkler was twirling its spray on the lawn. In fact the whole thing seemed absurd.

I made a business of lighting my pipe, and when I had it going, I said with a jocularity I didn't really feel, " Look Felicity, I'll stay down here now. Between us, we can keep an eye on the kids, and anyway Pam can't travel yet with her leg." I gave her a pat on the shoulder. " Come on, I'll go out to them now, and we can take them down to the beach for the afternoon. The cripple shall rest on the lawn."

I walked down the garden to the ruins where I found the kids playing hide and seek like ordinary healthy young animals and Stephen, laughing and shouting, appeared to be no worse off for his evening's sleep-walking. He was as dirty and noisy as any ten-year-old should be.

I gathered them together with some difficulty and a lot of horse-play which they enjoyed as much as I did, and finally I shepherded them towards the car. There was no mention of Jonathan until I had got them well on the way, when Jennifer suddenly asked me, " Daddy, may I have a lace collar for my Sunday dress ? "

" A lace collar, Jenny ? Whatever for ? "

" Jonathan has one. He says all nice girls and boys have one. Daddy, I'm a nice girl, aren't I ? "

I assured her that she was, and so laid myself wide open for an eight-year-old's logical reply, " Then I must have a lace collar. Please, Daddy."

Stephen said very quietly from the back of the car, " Don't you dare, Jenny, don't you dare."

I changed the subject quickly ; there was something unnaturally urgent in the boy's voice.

We got back that night tired out, and if Pamela wasn't asleep within five seconds of getting between the sheets, I was.

How long I'd been asleep I have no idea, but I was suddenly awakened by Pam, who was sitting up in bed staring at the window, and beyond.

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" David ! David, listen. For God's sake, listen."

I was wide awake now, my heart thudding sickeningly. And then I heard it. Precociously, almost pedantically precise. " Wait for me, Jonathan. Wait for me."

The sound of Jennifer's little voice coming from somewhere out there had me out of bed and across to the window in no time. What I saw fascinated me into immobility. Jennifer in her pyjamas was running across the lawn towards the ruins and ahead of her I could make out a fleeing little figure with something white round his neck. I realised it was the lace collar to which both Felicity and Jennifer had referred.

I was roused to action by the thump of Pamela's iron crossing the room, as she hobbled towards the door, tears streaming down her face.

In a flurry, I pushed past her, ran downstairs, through the open front door and across the lawn. Then I stopped. On the gravel path, I heard the sound of wheels and the snort of a horse ; beyond the poplars a cart disappeared into the darkness, and drifting back to me came the terrible sobbing of a child . . .

I ran headlong down the drive and out into the road. For a moment I thought I heard the crunch of wheels and I turned in that direction and started to run, but there was nothing. I must have stood there for an eternity, my mind blankly trying to make my body act. Should I get the car ? If so, where to ?

Then Pamela was beside me, her body thrown forward on her two sticks for support. All that stopped her from running on was her leg. Thus we stood, silently, together.

I put my arm round her shoulders and slowly helped her back to the house. We said nothing, because there was nothing to say. What questions could one ask about the unknown ?

In the lounge, I poured Pamela a stiff whisky and took one myself. The very ordinary action brought to Pam the relief of tears. I let her cry, it was by far the best thing.

She stopped crying abruptly. " My leg. If it hadn't been for my leg, this wouldn't have happened. I could have run after her. I could have stopped her." She suddenly gave a scream, " Oh David, don't you see ? I was warned. In the hospital, I was warned. Just before they gave me the anaesthetic, I heard Jennifer say, ' It's all right Mummy, don't worry, but I must go. Stephen wants to, but Jonathan won't let him. But he will let me and I must help him.' "

I turned on her, savagely, " Why the hell didn't you tell me this before ? "

" Because I didn't remember." She sighed. " I wasn't meant

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to. Can't you see it was all planned ? My leg. If I hadn't broken my ankle, we'd have broken the spell. Children have short memories. In the two days that we took them down to the beach, they had forgotten about Jonathan and could think of nothing but sand castles." She started to laugh. " Sand castles." Her voice started to rise hysterically, but with an effort she controlled herself. " So, you see, Jonathan had to act. He was lonely, poor little soul. How could he stop us from taking his playmates away ? Why, an accident, of course. He tripped me or made me fall."

She finished her whisky. " Then, David, oh darling, don't you understand ? He was sorry or perhaps scared at what he had done. He made it possible for Jennifer to let me know there was no need to worry. Not to worry ! " Pam leant back in the chair, her eyes drooping. " She had to go with him. That's all there was to it."

Whether it was mental exhaustion or the whisky I don't know, but Pamela's glass suddenly dropped to the floor and she was asleep. I put her injured leg up on the stool and covered her with a rug.

I went over to the window and looked out. The moon had gone down and the night was at its darkest ebb. Any moment now, the first light of dawn would touch the sky and another day would be born. A day when some explanation would have to be sought, some action taken. But what ? How could I go and report what I had seen to a village policeman ? He might know all about Jonathan, or he might laugh and consider me a candidate for the local asylum.

I crossed to the front door and went into the garden. The grass was heavy with dew and the air strong with the scent of tobacco plants which grew in profusion all round the house. Everything seemed so normal that I wanted to laugh, to go upstairs and look into the children's room and see Jennifer tucked up beside Peter ; to go down and say to Pamela, " Come on, darling, it was just a bad dream." But I knew it wasn't. I was looking down at the heavy dew on the lawn and I could see now the tearing mark that the iron on Pamela's cast had made in the turf. And there beside it I saw the marks of a child's bare feet ; just the toe marks, the sign of a child running. I could make out my footsteps and follow Pam's laboured journey, but Jennifer's were far away to the right and there was no other mark on the lawn.

Any hope that I had entertained of some logical explanation—some childish prank conceived during the day's play to worry parents—faded completely. I remembered Barrie's dream child, Margaret. I remembered his enchanted wood into which people disappeared. I could only wonder. I was too tired to worry any more. There was nothing I or any living human being could do.

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Back in the lounge, I flopped into a chair opposite Pamela who was sleeping restlessly.

I must have dropped off for I woke to find Felicity shaking Pam by the shoulder and calling, " Pam, wake up ! Wake up ! What on earth are you doing down here ? "

I started to say something—to try to stop her waking Pam. A glance at my watch told me it was only just seven o'clock, and I wondered why Felicity was up so early.

But already Pam was stirring. Her eyes opened and she groaned. " Oh, Felicity ! Down here ? Oh ! " She yawned and shook her head. " It was my leg. I couldn't sleep—it aches rather." She rubbed her knee and grimaced.

What was wrong ? Had Pam forgotten everything ? Had the whole nightmarish sequence of events been too much for her so that she had gone out of her mind ? Maybe I had too !

Pam looked across at me. " Oh, darling, I *am* sorry. Was I an awful nuisance ? I've overdone it, I think, David. Knee's a bit puffy. I should have rested it as I promised."

I got up dazed. I mumbled, " I'll get the local doctor to—to—er—have a look at that leg."

I went to my room and dressed quickly. My mind recoiled from what must be the reason for Pam's forgetting the night's events. I had seen shell-shock victims in the war, and I was terrified for her sanity. I heard Felicity in the bathroom. Of course, she could help me. She must.

I found her making a cold water compress for Pam's knee. She smiled at my dishevelled appearance.

" Don't look so tragic, David. I'll put this on her knee. It's only the bruise coming out. Poor girl, it's a nasty fracture."

I stared at her. It was incredible. Felicity was as calm as she used to be before Jonathan's appearance.

" Felicity," I blurted out. " It isn't that. It's Jennifer."

I began to tell her about the previous night's occurrences but she interrupted me brightly with, " What, you too ? Such a silly dream. Fancy you having it as well ? "

I wanted to scream but satisfied myself with shouting, " Dream ? What the devil do you mean—dream ? "

But Felicity was pushing past me, " Look, David, don't stand there. Go and fetch the doctor. I don't want to worry you unduly, but I think the cast on Pam's leg may be too tight. It might be dangerous." She pushed me gently towards the stairs.

I left the house and half ran up the road. It was about a quarter-past seven, and already the villagers were moving out to the fields. Was it my imagination or were they purposely avoiding my gaze ?

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I wanted to punch Felicity's head. What had she meant by dream ? Dream. Hadn't she looked into the kids' room ? Jennifer's bed was empty. Surely that would disprove her dream theory.

I found myself standing on the doctor's doorstep. I rang the bell and then started to hit the door with my fists. A head appeared at the window on the second storey.

" All right, boy, I'll be down directly. What is it, a birth ? "

I didn't reply, and after a time the door was opened by an oldish man with a slight stoop and untidy white hair.

" Come you in, boy, don't stand there like that. Come in."

He led me into his surgery, and, pulling on a tattered dressing gown, pushed me into a chair, saying, " Now, boy, let me have it all. But slowly."

" It's my wife—" I began abruptly, and then I told him the whole story. I don't know why but as I talked I felt peace creep over me. He was listening intently and I could see no incredulity in his eyes, only sympathy.

When I had finished, he said, " I'll put on some clothes and come and see your wife, boy. I don't like it. Last time—well, let's hope."

" What do you mean—last time ? "

" What do I mean, boy ? Ah, I wish I knew. How can anyone explain a thing like Jonathan ? Oh, yes, you needn't look so surprised, I've seen Jonathan's work before. Poor little fellow. Have you heard the tragic story about him ? "

I nodded. He put a thin hand through his wispy hair.

" Well," he went on, " he only appears when there are children at ' The Grange '. He mistrusts grown-ups and that's hardly surprising. To him, all adults are a menace. They all want to get rid of him. But the weird, perverse thing about him is that, in his complete disregard and loathing for grown-ups, he gives them the most precious gift of all. Forgetfulness."

The word hung in the air. " Aye, forgetfulness. You're an exception. But then, you've seen more than the others. Your wife, her friend, the children, none of them will remember Jonathan. At most it will be as a dream that has been half-broken. Something on the brink of the conscious mind that has never really left the sub-conscious. The children will never refer to him or think of him. Unless you try to bring him back, and if you do that to them or your wife, I wouldn't like to foretell the consequences."

He was completely dressed now and was pushing some instruments into his bag. " What of Jennifer ? " I put the question, terrified of his answer.

" Your daughter ? I wish I knew." He sighed, " I wish I knew."

We went back to the house in silence.

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It was chiming eight o'clock, yet the day seemed more than half spent. Just as we drew abreast of " The Grange " a car came round the corner and pulled up. The door opened and there was Jennifer. In a second she was in my arms. A little bundle wrapped in an old shawl, she was crying, " Oh daddy, daddy." Her little face was drawn and peaked and there were rivulets of tears down each cheek.

" Oh daddy, daddy dearest, I'm so tired."

The driver of the car was standing by, smiling at the spectacle of our reunion.

" You must be Mr. Barton." I looked at him through an unashamed mist of tears. I nodded. " I'm Sergeant Briggs of the Exton Police Constabulary."

" Exton ? " the doctor interjected.

" Aye, that's right, doctor. Found this gentleman's little girl wandering about the beach at six o'clock this morning. She was wet through so I took her back home and the wife gave her some dry clothes and a glass of hot milk. Then she told us where she lived and I brought her right over."

I didn't know what to say. I tried to thank him but all I wanted to do was to get Jennifer safely tucked up in bed.

We stood there, an awkward incongruous group, and the only sound was Jennifer's sobbing.

The Sergeant shuffled his feet awkwardly, " Well, I must be getting back, sir. Mustn't be late, break my record if I were."

" Yes—er, thank you, Sergeant. I'll drive down and see you later today." I could think of nothing that would repay the return of my daughter.

As I reached the house, the doctor said, " I'll go see your wife, boy, then I'll come up and see the child." He went into the lounge where I had left Pam.

I took Jennifer straight to her room where Peter was just beginning to wake up. When I lifted her off my shoulder, she was fast asleep. Crumpled into a damp little ball in her left fist was a white lace collar. It smelt of seaweed.

* * *

MISÈRE AVER

Social justice means that we deny ourselves many things so that others may have to do without them as well . . .

SIGMUND FREUD, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*

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THE BAD SAMARITAN

The preacher could scarcely believe his ears; his earnest efforts bearing fruit at last

by J. F. HUTTON

THE REVEREND KEOUGH rode slowly up to Luke Easton's ranch house. The old man was sitting on his porch, working over a board held on his knees. He didn't look up till the horse stopped, and he sighed gustily.

"Howdy, Rev'rend!"

In his deep, sombre voice, the preacher said, "Luke, I came to tell you how sorry I was to hear about Ben."

Luke shrugged. "Stubborn old cuss. But he was a good partner."

The preacher gave him a look of resignation and bafflement. Ben Megeath had been Luke's partner for thirty-five years. Last night he had been shot out of his saddle, killed and robbed. Yet Luke only shrugged . . .

After four years among them, Keough still couldn't feel he understood these Western men. Profane they were, and as tough as the mesquite that patterned their land. They listened to him with patience and respect. He had heard they even bragged about him to men from other parts. But in their rough and lonely lives they followed a law of their own.

"Better 'light an' get in the shade," Luke said.

The other shook his head. Only a man like the preacher would ride bareheaded in the desert sun. His face was as dark as an Indian's, and his shock of hair was bleached nearly white.

Luke held up a small board. "Doin' a little sign-paintin', Rev'rend. Wish you'd sit down with me. Mighty hot day."

"No, thank you. I have much to do."

Luke laid the board on the porch, wiped his hand on his Levies, and got out paper and tobacco. "Keepin' busy, eh?"

"Yes. But I'm more interested in what you've been doing."

Luke scratched his back against the dilapidated chair.

"Why, like I told you, I been paintin' a sign."

The deep voice was reproving. "I came by the corral. Your horse is covered with alkali dust."

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"Feller's got to look after his cows." Luke's old eyes twinkled. "Thought you was goin' to ask, did I see Blackwell?"

"I . . . was thinking of that."

"But you wasn't sure I'd tell you, hey?"

The preacher's face, as honest as a rock, showed discomfort. "No, Luke, I wasn't."

"Well, sir, I ain't seen hide nor hair of Blackwell for a week—not since that first day he showed up in town. And that's a fact."

Keough leaned over earnestly. "Blackwell's a man gone wrong. Ben wasn't the first one he killed—he was in trouble back East, too. But it's not for us to judge, Luke."

The old rancher took a pull at his cigarette and said nothing.

"It's not for men to fathom the ways of God."

Luke gazed off at the shimmering mountains in the distance. The preacher regarded him sympathetically. He could understand how the old man felt. And he couldn't really blame him for wanting to even the score.

Luke's bright glance came back. There was a smile tucked in the leathery corners of his mouth. "You know, Rev'rend, I been thinkin' about that business of an eye for an eye. I says to myself, anything you do now ain't a-goin' to help Ben. Even though you know where Blackwell went, you're a-goin' to leave things up to the law. Sooner or later, the skunk'll get what's comin' to him."

Keough could scarcely believe his ears. The way had been hard, among these men. But now he saw his earnest efforts bearing fruit. He suppressed his jubilation and said quietly, "Then you know where Blackwell is?"

"Plain as anything. How would any killer get away from here?" Luke waved a hand. "He headed out to the badlands."

Keough turned to look at them. Dry and wrinkled, the hills stretched for thirty desolate miles to the east.

"Does the sheriff know that Blackwell is headed out that way?" he asked.

"'Course he knows it! But what can he do? Take an army to smoke a man out of there."

The preacher's horse moved restlessly. Luke murmured to it. Then he went on, "I was worried about old Ben last night, Rev'rend. He wouldn't listen to me about leavin' that loan money in the bank. Said he wanted to have it in his hands for a while. Said he was old enough to take care of himself." Luke sighed. "So I trailed along after him. He'd 'a been madder'n a hornet if he'd known."

Keough's eyes swung round. "This was last night?"

"Yep. I was the first to find Ben. I looked for the prints of the other horse. An' I knew right away who killed Ben. No

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blacksmith in this territory makes the kind of shoes Blackwell's horse carries."

Keough's gaze returned to the hills. "So now Blackwell's out there. That's bad country, Luke, even for an old-timer."

"If a feller has water, it ain't so bad. There's trails, if a man's got eyes to see them. 'Course, Blackwell had to wait till daylight 'fore gettin' into it. But then he figgered he had plenty of time. He didn't think anybody'd be findin' Ben so soon."

Something in Luke's tone made the preacher look at him sharply.

Luke chuckled. "Oh, there's water out there, Rev'rend! Even a stranger couldn't miss Sandy Springs."

"But that's bad water. Poison."

"Sure enough is."

Luke reached for the board he had been painting when the preacher rode in.

"Remember the story you told in meetin' couple of weeks ago, about the feller who helped?"

Keough nodded slowly.

"Well, sir, I felt pretty bad last night, after I found Ben. I rode clean out to Sandy Springs, just a-thinkin'. That's where the alkali dust on my horse come from. When I got there I lit a match an' found the poison sign so faded out that a man could scarcely read it.

"Now, what would the Rev'rend do, I asked myself. There wasn't but one answer. Bring the sign back to the ranch an' paint it up good an' clear, so some thirsty devil wouldn't come along an' fill his belly with poison."

Keough ran a hand distractedly through his hair.

Luke slapped the board. "Yes, sir, looks like you've done some good around here, Rev'rend! Guess that makes me kin to that feller in the Bible. What's his name, now?"

Keough tried to speak, but his throat wouldn't let him.

* * *

IT'S A PLANT

Broccoli,
While not exoccoli,
Is within an inach
Of being spinach.

ROD MACLEAN

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MIXED GRILL

If you are ever at a loss to support a flagging conversation, introduce the subject of eating

LEIGH HUNT, 1784-1859

A tombstone (in Berkswell Churchyard, Warwickshire) has carved upon it 21 eggs, 16 rashers of bacon and two loaves representing the food consumed at one sitting by Clement Docker in 1775 to retain his title of local champion eater. He died as a result of the meal.

Last Words, collected by CECIL HUNT

Miss T

It's a very odd thing—
As odd as can be—
That whatever Miss T. eats
Turns into Miss T. ;
Porridge and apples,
Mince, muffins and mutton,
Jam, junket, jumbles—
Not a rap, not a button
It matters ; the moment
They're out of her plate,
Though shared by Miss Butcher
And sour Mr. Bate ;
Tiny and cheerful,
And neat as can be,
Whatever Miss T. eats
Turns into Miss T.

WALTER DE LA MARE, *Peacock Pie*

Potato Salad

And what is perhaps equally rare is the really altogether remarkable quality of the things which are served in it, food delicately manipulated, a stew such as the Parisians, one can shout that aloud, never have at their grandest dinners and which reminds me of certain *cordons bleus* of Jean d'Heurs. Even the *foie gras* has no relation to the tasteless froth which is generally served under that name, and I do not know many places where a simple potato salad

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is thus made with potatoes having the firmness of a Japanese ivory button and the patina of those little ivory spoons with which the Chinese pour water on the fish that they have just caught.

A rich red bejewelling is given to the Venetian goblet which stands before me by an amazing Léoville bought at the sale of M. Montalivet and it is a delight for the imagination and for the eye, I do not fear to say it, for the imagination of what one formerly called the jaw, to have served to one a brill which has nothing in common with that kind of stale brill served on the most luxurious tables which has received on its back the imprint of its bones during the delay of the journey, a brill not accompanied by that sticky glue generally called *sauce blanche* by so many of the chefs in great houses, but by a veritable *sauce blanche* made out of butter at five francs the pound ; to see this brill in a wonderful Tching Hon dish graced by the purple rays of a setting sun on a sea which an amusing band of lobsters is navigating, their rough tentacles so realistically pictured that they seem to have been modelled upon the living carapace, a dish of which the handle is a little Chinaman catching with his line a fish which makes the silvery azure of his stomach an enchantment of mother o' pearl.

MARCEL PROUST, 1871-1922, *Remembrance of Things Past*

Young Ladies Take Heed !

Methuselah ate what he found on his plate,
And never, as people do now,
Did he note the amount of the caloric count ;
He ate it because it was chow.

He wasn't disturbed, as at dinner he sat,
Destroying a roast or a pie,
To think it was lacking in lime or in fat,
Or a couple of vitamins shy.

He cheerfully chewed every species of food,
Untroubled by worries or fears,
Lest his health might be hurt by some fancy dessert—
And he lived over nine hundred years !

Author Unknown

A Childhood Memory

. . . . a nursery tea with one of Shan's sponge cakes—light as sea-foam, yellow as a gorse-bush . . .

EILUNED LEWIS, *Dew on the Grass*

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That Subtle Treachery

What can it be, that subtle treachery that lurks in Tea-cakes, and is wholly absent in the rude honesty of toast?

JOHN RUSKIN, 1819-1900

A Peck of Provender

TITANIA: *Or say, sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat.*

BOTTOM: *Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.*

TITANIA: *I have a venturous fairy that shall seek the squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee thence new nuts.*

BOTTOM: *I had rather have a handful or two of dried pease. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me: I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
A Midsummer Night's Dream

Home-Grown

But I must not omit that we have had for one week cabbages from our own cultivation every day! Oh, you have no idea how sweet they tasted! We agreed they had a freshness and a *goût* we had never met with before. We had them for too short a time to grow tired of them, because, as I have already hinted, they were beginning to run to seed before we knew they were eatable.

MADAME D'ARBLAY (*Fanny Burney*), 1752-1840,
Diary and Letters

A Beautiful Fry . . .

But when the day's hustle and bustle is done,
Then the Gumbie Cat's work is but hardly begun.
As she finds that the mice will not ever keep quiet,
She is sure it is due to irregular diet;
And believing that nothing is done without trying,
She sets right to work with her baking and frying.
She makes them a mouse-cake of bread and dried peas,
And a beautiful *fry of lean bacon and cheese.*

T. S. ELIOT, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*

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THE OBLIGING NIGHTINGALE

Lou Souléou they called her, after the warm, generous sun of Provence

by ANTONIA RIDGE

MY Uncle Jules, I am touched to tell you, always had the most punctilious—if completely unnecessary—regard for the Anglo-Saxon in me. So this is a story I would certainly not have heard if I hadn't pushed my chair back one warm summer night so that Uncle Jules completely forgot that I was still sitting out there on the terrace of his modest *Café-Restaurant-Chambres pour Voyageurs.*

There we were then that night: my Uncle Jules, old Gassin from the Bank, Monsieur Padde from the Gas and Electricity of France, and Monsieur Labise, who worked five days a week for French Railways and so was entitled to travel in them free on the other two days, but sensibly preferred to spend them taking it easy, listening to my Uncle Jules. And there was I too, sitting well back in the warm darkness . . . unseen, forgotten.

They had just finished one of their virulent games of *belotte* and were indeed still briskly arguing when Mademoiselle Titine sauntered by, shining hair piled high on provocative head, plump hips swaying professionally in her skin-tight skirt. She called out something ribald and quite untranslatable, and flaunted off down the street.

" *Bon Dieu !* " said Monsieur Labise. " Now that's asking for trouble if you please. This isn't her beat. She'll spend the night in the cooler if the police spot her."

" If our Mademoiselle Lilique spots her first," said Monsieur Padde, "she'll be profoundly grateful to see a stalwart policeman."

" My God, yes," snorted old Gassin. " Lilique will teach her. She'll knock her teeth down her throat ! "

" One must be just," observed my Uncle Jules, impressively judicial and enjoying it, " it is not only that Lilique is not so young as she was and therefore shows understandable resentment towards all trespassers, she is also, in her own way, fiercely honest."

" M'm, yes," admitted old Gassin.

" A woman may be a *fille-de-joie*," went on my Uncle Jules warming to his own fairmindedness, " but she still has her feelings. Moreover she, too, is still capable of surprising herself, and every-

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body else as well whilst she is at it. Take the case of Lou Souléou for instance. Now there was an astonishing woman for you!"

He paused. My Uncle Jules knew, none better, the value of a few moments' suspense before any narrative.

"Lou Souléou?" queried Monsieur Padde presently.

"*Lou Souléou mi fa canta*," quoted my Uncle Jules in rich, rolling Provençal. "The sun makes me sing—the warm, generous sun of Provence that makes our tenors sing like angels and our cicadas chirp incessantly."

That is why, he went on, she was called Lou Souléou, because she too had the most ebullient gifts for the encouragement of song. I do not suggest however that Lou Souléou made *her* clients sing like angels. It is deplorably true that they frequently sang like all the lost in hell let loose for the night and out on the spree. But the fact remains, she made them sing, all of them, to a man.

Imagine her now in "The Obliging Nightingale", an undistinguished little *bistro* in that interesting network of narrow streets that used to lie behind our Municipal Opera House. The usual set-up: a dozen or two chairs set about three or four tables, alluring advertisements for *apéritifs* plastered all over the pink-washed walls, a zinc-topped bar with shelves of bottles behind it. Everything very bright and clean though. Lou Souléou liked things that way.

She herself was a strapping giant of a woman with a smooth pale skin and great dark eyes. And a voice! *Vai*! You could hear her four streets away especially when she was encouraging the customers to join in her favourite number written for her by an appreciative Parisian who had passed through the Roman town of Vienne on his way down here to Marseilles:

Lou Souléou and the Venus of Vienne,
Now there are two ladies who understand men!

Then, sitting at his post near the door, Victor the hunchback would strike up on his accordion, and soon every man in the crowded little *bistro* would be singing chorus after chorus from *But she had such innocent eyes, Papa!* to such tender Provençal love songs as *O Magali ma tant amado!*

And Lou Souléou, singing away, jollying them along, would beat time with one plump hand and adroitly indicate empty glasses with the other to spry little Mimi the waitress. Oh yes, an excellent business woman, Lou Souléou.

Victor the hunchback adored her, but in his own queer, practical way. No senseless jealousy. Men loved Lou Souléou. Lou Souléou loved men. One accepted it. It was as simple as that.

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Besides he knew that he alone, he Victor the hunchback, was indispensable to Lou Souléou. She often told him so. She would kiss him on the mouth and call him her little Totor, and she would buy him fine white shirts sprigged with red flowers, and shining yellow shoes. And it wasn't only his music, his warm responsive music so quick to leap to the sparkle, the jest in her every song. No, no, there was also Armistice Day.

You must understand that at crack of dawn every eleventh of November, two old people would set out from their tiny *mas* high in the mountains up there in the Gard and trudge down to take the early train to Marseilles. They would both be dressed in their neat Sunday black, he carrying an ancient umbrella, she a large basket, a white napkin carefully folded over it, and a great tight bunch of autumn flowers.

And waiting for them outside our station would be Lou Souléou, a strange subdued Lou Souléou in a discreet black coat, hair decorously plaited about her head, no paint on her smooth face and generous mouth. And she would gather them into her arms, and stoop to kiss their withered cheeks, and cry, "*Papa! Maman!*" and they would say, "God is good. You are looking well, Marie-Francine."

Then they would go over to the Café de la Gare, and Lou Souléou would order coffee and croissants with butter, and the old woman would take two great check handkerchiefs from her basket and carefully spread one on her knees and tuck the other into the old man's waistcoat, and as she buttered his croissant she would say again, very happily, "God is good. This is just as we always imagine, *hein*, Justus?"

Then, one each side of Lou Souléou, they would set off down the street, and the policeman on traffic duty at the corner would never dream of shouting his customary greeting. No, no, on that day, he always saluted most respectfully and called, "*Bonjour, monsieur-dames!*" And Lou Souléou would reply demurely, "*Bonjour, monsieur,*" but a swift sidelong flash of her dark eyes would add, "*Et merci!*"

They would go straight down to the Vieux Port, and there would be the boats, the little boats filling up with all the others who had come with their flowers to remember on this day *Les Gêns de Mer*—the sons, husbands and brothers who had once sailed out to make war and never returned.

And all these little boats, as perhaps you remember, would sail out and circle there on the sea. In one a priest chanted, in another a pastor prayed, in another a rabbi sang a high ancient lament. Round and round they sailed, and in one of them stood

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Lou Souléou between her parents, all three of them remembering Marius and Jean-Marie and Frédéri-Joseph who once played so merrily under the fig-trees of a tiny *mas* high on the mountainside, and who now slept on the bed of a cruel foreign sea, very far away on the other side of the world.

With tears streaming down her face, Lou Souléou would stoop to help untie the great tight bunch of flowers, and taking some in both hands she too would throw them out on the water. From all the little boats they now would come—scented showers of daisies, chrysanthemums and asters—till all the sea between them became a lovely floating carpet of flowers—scarlet, purple, gold and white.

Then back would sail the little boats, and as they climbed ashore, Lou Souléou would turn and look once more at the flowers floating there on the blue sea. Then she would blow her nose and say, " Wait here. I'll get a cab, yes, yes, I insist ! " And the old woman would say proudly, " *Té* ! What extravagance ! " And the old man would reply, " What did I tell you ? Business must still be good here for our Marie-Francine."

And business that night at " The Obliging Nightingale " was always more than good for their Marie-Francine . . . it was exemplary.

Victor, at his post near the door, would mutter a few words to ever incomer and discreetly indicate the old couple sitting there, very proud and formal by the zinc-topped bar. And Lou Souléou, most delicately made-up, would politely introduce them all, but with a warning flash of her expressive eyes, so that even the bawdy Hercule, who officially swallowed swords down on the *Cannebière* but who had other far less reputable sidelines, he also prudently addressed Lou Souléou as Mademoiselle. But I swear it was not only the look in her eye that plainly implied that even he, Hercule, could be found stiff and cold with a knife between his ribs. No, there was something so innocent, so touching, about the old couple sitting proudly there in their decent black that froze all the witticisms even on his salacious lips.

Moreover before the evening was out, he too would be joining in, *Halt ! Halt ! The Mountain Troops are here !* and such moving refrains as, *No, no, you take the life-belt, dear comrade !* And it was always he who vociferously led the applause when the old man obliged in his thin quavering voice with :

I am called Papa Victory,
I am a hundred today,
But for France, my dear country,
My heart beats alway.

After this, everybody drank their health, and they would shake

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hands all round, and Lou Souléou would escort them upstairs with a meaning flick of the thumb to the watchful Victor at the door. Then he would pack up his accordion, and inform the customers that " The Obliging Nightingale " went to roost with the utmost decorum and speed on Armistice Night, so no back answers or Lou Souléou would arrange to slit their noisy throats when she returned from seeing her visitors off early next morning.

Yes, that is how it was every eleventh of November at " The Obliging Nightingale ". I assure you that on that night the Children of Mary could have met there with the most decorous impunity. And it surely must have been recorded to their celestial credit that on this date, not only Lou Souléou's customers but the whole quarter played up so convincingly that the old couple always went home to their little *mas*, their simple hearts brimming with joyous satisfaction that their Marie-Francine ran so respectable a business with such friendly customers and neighbours.

One bitter night in December, I remember the mistral was blowing as sharp as a knife, there were no warm lights in " The Obliging Nightingale ", and on the closed door was pinned a terse card: " Closed for seven days."

Naturally rumour ran riotous and free. The most popular was that Lou Souléou was at last in jail, the first victim of the municipality's dramatic new drive for votes and cleaning up the city. Then came the truth, from Hercule of all people. He had seen Lou Souléou, in black from head to toe, carrying a large wreath of bead flowers, buying a ticket at the railway-station.

" Doubtless Papa Victory has piped his last little tune," he said.

" They both have," said Victor abruptly. " I have had a card. The old woman found him dead in his chair. So she dropped quietly down beside him."

A week later Lou Souléou was back, flashier, louder of voice, more vividly painted than ever. One felt that she invited no condolences. If any were offered, she shrugged them off with a casual, " *C'est la vie, quoi* ! "

And truly it was the way of life, for within the year Lou Souléou had another blow. Victor the hunchback disappeared, just like that, without a word. One night he was there, playing away; the next, he was gone, leaving behind his accordion, his pale grey suit, his fine white shirts and his shining yellow shoes.

He never returned.

But Lou Souléou soon had another in his place, a decorative Italian this time, with a guitar. And this Luigi had fire, make no mistake about that. The singing at " The Obliging Nightingale " was if anything louder and freer than before. But to the discerning

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ear, gone now was the quick wit, the swift inspired lilt that had so illumined Lou Souléou's songs. Indeed, at first she would occasionally stop dead in the middle of a number and say, " Forgive me ! But that camel of a guitar does something to my vocal chords." Whereupon Luigi, stung to his Neapolitan soul, would pull out his knife and express his intention to silence her chords for ever ; and Lou Souléou would laugh with all her white teeth and call him her passionate macaroni-boy and cajole and flatter him till there he would be playing *O Sole Mio* very *tremolando* and *fortississimo*.

Then, like a bolt from the blue, came the third blow. For the first time in all her hardy, robust life, Lou Souléou fell ill—a double pneumonia that played the devil with her great lungs. Six months later she crawled out of the sanatorium, a pitiful shadow. She had, of course, been forced to give up " The Obliging Nightingale ", and she never once came back, much to the relief of the new tenant, a fat Russian called Olga who couldn't sing a note, but who installed a powerful mechanical piano that could play six tunes, and did so, doggedly *da capo* all night long, or until the neighbours expostulated with bricks and somebody rang up the police.

As for Lou Souléou, she was silently swallowed up in the tangle of little streets in the Maritime Quarter.

One summer night, Mimi came running into " The Obliging Nightingale ", her face very white under the paint. " Quick ! " she said. " Give me a drink ! I've been to see Lou Souléou ! "

She had to gulp down two cognacs before she could blurt out that Lou Souléou now lay dying in a dirty hot hole of a room under the roof of one of those tall houses near the Negro Quarter.

" But it isn't that which gripes me so," said Mimi jerkily. " We all have to face as much one of these days. It is that she cannot live, and she will not die. Yes, you heard what I said. She just won't let herself die."

It seemed that Lou Souléou had promised the old couple that when her time came, she would be buried by their side up there in the little cemetery on their mountainside. She had vowed to put the money aside. And she had. But she had taken too long to die. Now, even that had gone, every sou. And there she lingered in that hot dirty hole, too bitterly wretched to die.

" But you must go and tell her that her old friends of ' The Obliging Nightingale ' will arrange things," cried Olga compassionately.

" Arrange things ! " shrilled Mimi. " Where would we get all that money ? You Russians make me sick ! Talk, talk, talk ! "

" Perhaps," agreed the amiable Olga. " It is one way of passing the time. But at moments we also can think."

Olga did more than think. The following day a most incon-

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gruous bottle appeared on the zinc bar of " The Obliging Nightingale ". Once it had held Châteauneuf-du-Pape, a celestial wine that delicately mellows the hardest heart. But now it held something even more moving and celestial—a statue, a naïve joyous little statue of Our Lady of the Snows, blue cape spangled with stars, bright yellow hair, rosy cheeks, red smiling mouth. And in her arms, a jocund Child, arms eagerly outstretched as if to catch some charming bauble. And when this bottle was shaken, all about their laughing innocence fell a fine silvery shower of frosty flakes.

Believe me, it was altogether delightful. The whole quarter thought so—even Hercule. Naturally he never admitted as much. He would lean on the bar and blaspheme, " *Bon Dieu de Bon Dieu!* I cannot figure how in the triple hell they got all this in a bottle with so narrow a neck ! " But he too would pay for a shake by slipping something into the box standing by the side of the bottle, a wooden box with a slit in its lid on which Olga had printed: " *Pour Lou Souléou. R.I.P.*"

One evening the mechanical piano was churning out *Alléluia d'Amour* when Mimi suddenly rushed over and slammed it off. Everybody stopped shouting and turned to stare. And there, in the doorway, swayed Lou Souléou, a stiff smile on her carmined lips.

I tell you it was as if they beheld a ghost. Worse. Death itself looked at them from those great burning eyes sunk deep in violet hollows in that haggard face.

" Well ! " she croaked. " Isn't anyone going to offer me a drink ? "

With a thousand confused kindnesses they got her to a chair, put a glass of old brandy in her skeleton hand, and told her she looked fine, but fine !

She wasn't listening. She pointed to the bottle on the bar. " I heard about it," she gasped. " I had to see if it was true."

Olga brought it to her and shook it. " There ! " she said as if to a sick child. " Pretty, no ? "

" Is that also true ? " asked Lou Souléou pointing to the box.

" Of course," said Olga, reading her thoughts.

" It . . . it is . . . kind of you all," said Lou Souléou thickly. Then, with a flash of her old, mocking smile, " I can rely on it ? "

" Yes, yes, I swear it ! " said Olga. " Already we have more than enough."

" In that case," said Lou Souléou, " I will drink my last little toast." She struggled to her feet and raised her glass. " To the most generous and obliging of Nightingales ! "

She drank, and helped by Mimi began to make for the door, cracking a joke about not being in good voice or she would oblige with a song before going home.

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In the doorway she turned and waved to them all. "Well, enjoy yourselves!" she said. "Life is short! Adieu!"

"Au revoir," they called, and "Come back soon!" Then Hercule shouted in a queer high voice, "She's damn well right! Life is short!" And he switched on the mechanical piano and flung his arms about the nearest girl; and they all began to talk, very fast, very loud, about anything, anything, except Lou Souléou.

Ten days later Monsieur le Curé of Saint Sauveur des Montagnes buried Marie-Francine Bécongnan in his little cemetery where the wind comes blowing down the mountainside heavy with the scent of thyme and lavender, and where the cicadas sing incessantly in the wild fig trees. Mimi was the only mourner. And it was she who placed the only wreath on the grave—a hideous expensive wreath of purple bead flowers on which perched a great green china bird. In its beak was a card which said "*Lou Souléou mi fa canta.*"

This caused quite a sensation in that quiet village, I can tell you. People used to go and look at it after Mass of a Sunday. It gave them something about which they could argue and speculate. It is still there, in fact. You can see it for yourself if ever you climb up there one day.

But you'll never see "The Obliging Nightingale" of course. It has long since disappeared. Even a *boîte-de-nuit* needs something more than a mechanical piano to keep it going.

My Uncle Jules gave a great sigh, and poured out a drink all round.

Old Gassin stared at him. "Tell me," he said. "How do you know all this? You must have been a mere boy at the time."

"I was nearly seventeen," said my uncle with considerable hauteur. "Moreover I was in the First Class of Philosophy. So naturally I was madly in love with Lou Souléou. So were all the others in my class. Hopelessly of course. Even at that sanguine age one does not expect miracles on ten francs a week pocket money!"

I laughed out loud.

"*Grand Dieu!*" cried my Uncle Jules and spun round. "Are you still there?"

"*T'en fais pas!*" muttered old Gassin. "No English Miss could possibly understand such a story."

* * *

Egotism à deux is the stuff of which happy loves are made.

ELIZABETH BIBESCO, *Haven*

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★*W. W. Jacobs is remembered chiefly as a humorist, and except for "The Monkey's Paw" his small, brilliant output of suspense and horror stories is not nearly so well known as, we believe, it deserves. And in this grim little masterpiece the reader will find the economy of words and uncanny power of suggestion that place the author among the finest story-tellers of his day.*

THE INTERRUPTION

by W. W. JACOBS

THE last of the funeral guests had gone and Spencer Goddard, in decent black, sat alone in his small, well-furnished study. There was a queer sense of freedom in the house since the coffin had left it; the coffin which was now hidden in its solitary grave beneath the yellow earth.

The air, which for the last three days had seemed stale and contaminated, now smelt fresh and clean. He went to the open window and, looking into the fading light of the autumn day, took a deep breath.

He closed the window and, stooping down, put a match to the fire. Dropping into his easy chair, he sat listening to the cheery crackle of the wood. At the age of thirty-eight he had turned over a fresh page. Life, free and unencumbered, was before him. His dead wife's money was at last his, to spend as he pleased, instead of being doled out in reluctant driblets.

He turned at a step at the door and his face assumed the appearance of gravity and sadness it had worn for the last four days. The cook, with the same air of decorous grief, entered the room quietly and, crossing to the mantelpiece, placed upon it a photograph.

"I thought you'd like to have it, sir," she said, in a low voice, "to remind you."

Goddard thanked her, and, rising, took it in his hand and stood regarding it. He noticed with satisfaction that his hand was absolutely steady.

"It is a very good likeness—till she was taken ill," continued the woman. "I never saw anybody change so sudden."

"The nature of her disease, Hannah," said her master.

The woman nodded, and, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief, stood regarding him.

"Is there anything you want?" he inquired, after a time.

She shook her head. "I can't believe she's gone," she said, in a

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low voice. "Every now and then I have a queer feeling that she's still here—"

"It's your nerves," said her master sharply.

"—and wanting to tell me something."

By a great effort Goddard refrained from looking at her.

"Nerves," he said again. "Perhaps you ought to have a little holiday. It has been a great strain upon you."

"You, too, sir," said the woman respectfully. "Waiting on her hand and foot as you have done, I can't think how you stood it. If you'd only had a nurse—"

"I preferred to do it myself, Hannah," said her master. "If I had had a nurse it would have alarmed her."

The woman assented. "And they are always peeking and prying into what doesn't concern them," she added. "Always think they know more than the doctors do."

Goddard turned a slow look upon her. The tall, angular figure was standing in an attitude of respectful attention; the cold slaty-brown eyes were cast down, the sullen face expressionless.

"She couldn't have had a better doctor," he said, looking at the fire again. "No man could have done more for her."

"And nobody could have done more for her than you did, sir," was the reply. "There's few husbands that would have done what you did."

Goddard stiffened in his chair. "That will do, Hannah," he said curtly.

"Or done it so well," said the woman, with measured slowness.

With a strange, sinking sensation, her master paused to regain his control. Then he turned and eyed her steadily. "Thank you," he said slowly; "you mean well, but at present I cannot discuss it."

For some time after the door had closed behind her, he sat in deep thought.

The feeling of well-being of a few minutes before had vanished, leaving in its place an apprehension which he refused to consider, but which would not be allayed.

He thought over his actions of the last few weeks, carefully, and could remember no flaw. His wife's illness, the doctor's diagnosis, his own solicitous care, were all in keeping with the ordinary.

He tried to remember the woman's exact words—her manner. Something had shown him Fear. What?

He could have laughed at his fears next morning. The dining-room was full of sunshine and the fragrance of coffee and bacon was in the air. Better still, a worried and commonplace Hannah. Worried over two eggs with false birth certificates, over the vendor of which she became almost lyrical.

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" The bacon is excellent," said her smiling master, " so is the coffee ; but your coffee always is."

Hannah smiled in return, and, taking fresh eggs from a rosy-cheeked maid, put them before him.

A pipe, followed by a brisk walk, cheered him still further. He came home glowing with exercise and again possessed with that sense of freedom and freshness. He went into the garden—now his own—and planned alterations.

After lunch he went over the house. The windows of his wife's bedroom were open and the room neat and airy. His glance wandered from the made-up bed to the brightly-polished furniture.

Then he went to the dressing-table and opened the drawers, searching each in turn. With the exception of a few odds and ends they were empty. He went out on to the landing and called for Hannah.

" Do you know whether your mistress locked up any of her things ? " he inquired.

" What things ? " said the woman.

" Well, her jewellery mostly."

" Oh ! " Hannah smiled. " She gave it all to me," she said quietly.

Goddard checked an exclamation. His heart was beating nervously, but he spoke sternly.

" When ? "

" Just before she died—of gastro-enteritis," said the woman.

There was a long silence. He turned and with great care mechanically closed the drawers of the dressing-table. The tilted glass showed him the pallor of his face, and he spoke without turning round.

" That is all right, then," he said huskily. " I only wanted to know what had become of it. I thought, perhaps, Milly—"

Hannah shook her head. " Milly's all right," she said, with a strange smile. " She's as honest as we are. Is there anything more you want, sir ? "

She closed the door behind her with the quietness of the well-trained servant. Goddard, steadying himself with his hand on the rail of the bed, stood looking into the future.

The days passed monotonously, as they pass with a man in prison. Gone was the sense of freedom and the idea of a wider life. Instead of a cell, a house with ten rooms—but Hannah, the jailer, guarding each one.

Respectful and attentive, the model servant, she betrayed in every word a threat against his liberty—his life. In the sullen face and cold eyes he saw her knowledge of power ; in her solicitude for his comfort and approval, a sardonic jest. It was the master playing at being the servant.

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The years of unwilling servitude were over, but she felt her way carefully with infinite zest in the game. Warped and bitter, with a cleverness which had never before had scope, she had entered into her kingdom. She took it little by little, savouring every morsel.

"I hope I've done right, sir," she said one morning. "I have given Milly notice."

Goddard looked up from his paper. "Isn't she satisfactory?" he inquired.

"Not to my thinking, sir," said the woman. "And she says she is coming to see you about it. I told her that would be no good."

"I had better see her and hear what she has to say," said her master.

"Of course, if you wish to," said Hannah; "only, after giving her notice, if she doesn't go I shall. I should be sorry to go—I've been very comfortable here—but it's either her or me."

"I should be sorry to lose you," said Goddard in a hopeless voice.

"Thank you, sir," said Hannah. "I'm sure I've tried to do my best. I've been with you some time now—and I know all your little ways. I expect I understand you better than anybody else would. I do all I can to make you comfortable."

"Very well, I leave it to you," said Goddard in a voice which strove to be brisk and commanding. "You have my permission to dismiss her."

"There's another thing I wanted to see you about," said Hannah; "my wages. I was going to ask for a rise, seeing that I'm really housekeeper here now."

"Certainly," said her master, considering, "that seems only fair. Let me see—what are you getting?"

"Thirty-six."

Goddard reflected for a moment and then turned with a benevolent smile. "Very well," he said cordially, "I'll make it forty-two. That's ten shillings a month more."

"I was thinking of a hundred," said Hannah dryly.

The significance of the demand appalled him. "Rather a big jump," he said at last. "I really don't know that I—"

"It doesn't matter," said Hannah. "I thought I was worth it—to you—that's all. You know best. Some people might think I was worth *two* hundred. That's a bigger jump, but after all a big jump is better than—"

She broke off and tittered. Goddard eyed her.

"—than a big drop," she concluded.

Her master's face set. The lips almost disappeared and something came into the pale eyes that was revolting. Still eyeing her, he rose and approached her. She stood her ground and met him eye to eye.

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" You are jocular," he said at last.

" Short life and a merry one," said the woman.

" Mine or yours ? "

" Both, perhaps," was the reply.

" If—if I give you a hundred," said Goddard, moistening his lips, " that ought to make your life merrier, at any rate."

Hannah nodded. " Merry and long, perhaps," she said slowly. " I'm careful, you know—very careful."

" I am sure you are," said Goddard, his face relaxing.

" Careful what I eat and drink, I mean," said the woman, eyeing him steadily.

" That is wise," he said slowly. " I am myself—that is why I am paying a good cook a large salary. But don't overdo things, Hannah ; don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

" I am not likely to do that," she said coldly. " Live and let live ; that is my motto. Some people have different ones. But I'm careful ; nobody won't catch me napping. I've left a letter with my sister, in case."

Goddard turned slowly and in a casual fashion put the flowers straight in a bowl on the table, and, wandering to the window, looked out. His face was white again and his hands trembled.

" To be opened after my death," continued Hannah. " I don't believe in doctors—not after what I've seen of them—I don't think they know enough ; so if I die I shall be examined. I've given good reasons."

" And suppose," said Goddard, coming from the window, " suppose she is curious, and opens it before you die ? "

" We must chance that," said Hannah, shrugging her shoulders, " but I don't think she will. I sealed it up with sealing-wax, with a mark on it."

" She might open it and say nothing about it," persisted her master.

An unwholesome grin spread slowly over Hannah's features. " I should know it soon enough," she declared boisterously, " and so would other people. Lord ! there would be an upset ! Chidham would have something to talk about for once. We should be in the paper—both of us."

Goddard forced a smile. " Dear me ! " he said gently. " Your pen seems to be a dangerous weapon, Hannah. But I hope that the need to open the letter will not happen for another fifty years. You look well and strong."

The woman nodded. " I don't take up my troubles before they come," she said, with a satisfied air, " but there's no harm in trying to prevent them coming. Prevention is better than cure."

" Exactly," said her master, " and by the way, there's no need

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for this little financial arrangement to be known by anybody else. I might become unpopular with my neighbours for setting a bad example. Of course, I am giving you this sum because I really think you are worth it."

"I'm sure you do," said Hannah. "I'm not sure I ain't worth more, but this'll do to go on with. I shall get a girl for less than we are paying Milly, and that'll be another little bit extra for me."

"Certainly," said Goddard, and smiled again.

"Come to think of it," said Hannah, pausing at the door, "I ain't sure I shall get anybody else; then there'll be more than ever for me. If I do the work I might as well have the money."

Her master nodded, and, left to himself, sat down to think out a position which was as intolerable as it was dangerous. At a great risk he had escaped from the dominion of one woman only to fall, bound and helpless, into the hands of another.

However vague and unconvincing the suspicions of Hannah might be, they would be sufficient. Evidence could be unearthed.

Cold with fear one moment, and hot with fury the next, he sought in vain for some avenue of escape. It was his brain against that of a cunning, illiterate fool; a fool whose malicious stupidity only added to his danger.

And she drank. With largely increased wages, she would drink more and his very life might depend upon a hiccuped boast.

It was clear that she was enjoying her supremacy; later on, her vanity would urge her to display it before others. He might have to obey the crack of her whip before witnesses, and they would cut off all possibility of escape.

He sat with his head in his hands. There must be a way out, and he must find it. Soon. He must find it before gossip began; before the changed position of master and servant lent colour to her story when that story became known.

Shaking with fury, he thought of her lean, ugly throat and the joy of choking her life out with his fingers. He started suddenly, and took a quick breath. No, not fingers—a rope.

Bright and cheerful outside and with his friends, in the house he was quiet and submissive. Milly had gone, and, if the service was poorer and the rooms neglected, he gave no sign. If a bell remained unanswered he made no complaint, and to studied insolence turned the other cheek of politeness.

When, at this tribute to her power, the woman smiled, he smiled in return. A smile which, for all its disarming softness, left her vaguely uneasy.

"I'm not afraid of you," she said once, with a menacing air.

"I hope not," said Goddard in a slightly surprised voice.

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"Some people might be, but I'm not," she declared. "If anything happened to me—"

"Nothing could happen to such a careful woman as you are," he said, smiling again. "You ought to live to ninety—with luck."

It was clear to him that the situation was getting on his nerves. Unremembered but terrible dreams haunted his sleep. Dreams in which some great, inevitable disaster was always pressing upon him, although he could never discover what it was.

Each morning he awoke unrefreshed to face another day of torment. He could not meet the woman's eyes for fear of revealing the threat that was in his own.

Delay was dangerous and foolish. He had thought out every move in the contest of wits which was to take the shadow of the rope from his own neck and place it about that of the woman.

There was a little risk, but the stake was a big one. He had but to set the ball rolling and others would keep it on its course. It was time to act.

He came in a little jaded from his afternoon walk, and left his tea untouched. He ate but little dinner, and, sitting hunched up over the fire, told the woman that he had taken a slight chill. Her concern, he felt grimly, might have been greater if she had known the cause.

He was no better next day, and after lunch called in to consult his doctor. He left with a clean bill of health except for a slight digestive derangement, the remedy for which he took away with him in a bottle. For two days he swallowed one tablespoonful three times a day in water, without result, then he took to his bed.

"A day or two in bed won't hurt you," said the doctor. "Show me that tongue of yours again."

"But what is the matter with me, Roberts?" inquired the patient.

The doctor pondered. "Nothing to trouble about—nerves a bit wrong—digestion a little bit impaired. You'll be all right in a day or two."

Goddard nodded. So far, so good; Roberts had not outlived his usefulness. He smiled grimly, after the doctor had left, at the surprise he was preparing for him. A little rough on Roberts and his professional reputation, perhaps, but these things could not be avoided.

He lay back and visualized the programme. A day or two longer, getting gradually worse, then a little sickness. After that a nervous, somewhat shamefaced patient hinting at things. His food had a queer taste—he felt worse after taking it; he knew it was ridiculous, still—there was some of his beef-tea he had put aside, perhaps the doctor would like to examine it? And the medicine! Secretions, too; perhaps he would like to see those?

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Propped on his elbow, he stared fixedly at the wall. There would be a trace—a faint trace—of arsenic in the secretions. There would be more than a trace in the other things. An attempt to poison him would be clearly indicated, and—his wife's symptoms had resembled his own—let Hannah get out of the web he was spinning if she could.

As for the letter she had threatened him with, let her produce it; it could only recoil upon herself. Fifty letters could not save her from the doom he was preparing for her. It was her life or his, and he would show no mercy.

For three days he doctored himself with sedulous care, watching himself anxiously the while. His nerve was going and he knew it.

Before him was the ordeal of the discovery, the arrest, and the trial. The gruesome business of his wife's death. A long business. He would wait no longer, and he would open the proceedings with dramatic suddenness.

It was between nine and ten o'clock at night when he rang his bell, and it was not until he had rung four times that he heard the heavy steps of Hannah mounting the stairs.

"What d'you want?" she demanded, standing in the doorway.

"I'm very ill," he said, gasping. "Run for the doctor. Quick!"

The woman stared at him in genuine amazement. "What, at this time o' night?" she exclaimed. "Not likely."

"I'm dying!" said Goddard in a broken voice.

"Not you," she said roughly. "You'll be better in the morning."

"I'm dying," he repeated. "Go—for—the—doctor."

The woman hesitated. The rain beat in heavy squalls against the window, and the doctor's house was a mile distant on the lonely road. She glanced at the figure on the bed.

"I should catch my death o' cold," she grumbled.

She stood sullenly regarding him. He certainly looked very ill, and his death would by no means benefit her. She listened, scowling, to the wind and the rain.

"All right," she said at last, and went noisily from the room.

His face set in a mirthless smile, he heard her bustling about below. The front door slammed violently and he was alone.

He waited for a few minutes and then, getting out of bed, put on his dressing-gown and set about his preparations. With a steady hand he added a little white powder to the remains of his beef-tea and to the contents of his bottle of medicine.

He stood listening a moment at some faint sound from below, and, having satisfied himself, lit a candle and made his way to Hannah's room. For a space he stood irresolute, looking about him. Then he opened one of the drawers and, placing the broken packet

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of powder under a pile of clothing at the back, made his way back to bed.

He was disturbed to find that he was trembling with excitement and nervousness. He longed for tobacco, but that was impossible. To reassure himself he began to rehearse his conversation with the doctor, and again he thought over every possible complication.

The scene with the woman would be terrible; he would have to be too ill to take any part in it. The less he said the better. Others would do all that was necessary.

He lay for a long time listening to the sound of the wind and the rain. Inside, the house seemed unusually quiet, and with an odd sensation he suddenly realized that it was the first time he had been alone in it since his wife's death. He remembered that she would have to be disturbed. The thought was unwelcome. He did not want her to be disturbed. Let the dead sleep.

He sat up in bed and drew his watch from beneath the pillow. Hannah ought to have been back before; in any case she could not be long now. At any moment he might hear her key in the lock. He lay down again and reminded himself that things were shaping well. He had shaped them, and some of the satisfaction of the artist was his.

The silence was oppressive. The house seemed to be listening, waiting. He looked at his watch again and wondered, with a curse, what had happened to the woman.

It was clear that the doctor must be out, but that was no reason for her delay. It was close on midnight, and the atmosphere of the house seemed in some strange fashion to be brooding and hostile.

In a lull in the wind, he thought he heard footsteps outside, and his face cleared as he sat up listening for the sound of the key in the door below. In another moment the woman would be in the house and the fears engendered by a disordered fancy would have flown.

The sound of the steps had ceased, but he could hear no sound of entrance. Until all hope had gone, he sat listening. He was certain he had heard footsteps. Whose?

Trembling and haggard, he sat waiting, assailed by a crowd of murmuring fears. One whispered that he had failed and would have to pay the penalty of failing; that he had gambled with death and lost.

By a strong effort he fought down these fancies and, closing his eyes, tried to compose himself to rest. It was evident now that the doctor was out and that Hannah was waiting to return with him in his car. He was frightening himself for nothing. At any moment he might hear the sound of their arrival.

He heard something else, and, sitting up suddenly, tried to think

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what it was and what had caused it. It was a very faint sound—stealthy.

Holding his breath, he waited for it to be repeated. He heard it again, the mere ghost of a sound—the whisper of a sound, but significant as most whispers are.

He wiped his brow with his sleeve and told himself firmly that it was nerves, and nothing but nerves ; but, against his will, he still listened. He fancied now that the sound came from his wife's room, on the other side of the landing.

It increased in loudness and became more insistent. But with his eyes fixed on the door of his room he still kept himself in hand, and tried to listen instead to the wind and the rain.

For a time he heard nothing but that. Then there came a scraping, scurrying noise from his wife's room, and a sudden, terrific crash.

With a loud scream his nerve broke, and springing from the bed he sped downstairs and, flinging open the front door, dashed into the night. The door, caught by the wind, slammed behind him.

With his hand holding the garden gate open, ready for further flight, he stood sobbing for breath. His bare feet were bruised and the rain was very cold, but he took no heed. Then he ran a little way along the road and stood for some time, hoping and listening.

He came back slowly. The wind was bitter and he was soaked to the skin. The garden was black and forbidding, and unspeakable horror might be lurking in the bushes.

He went up the road again, trembling with cold. Then, in desperation, he passed through the terrors of the garden to the house, only to find the door closed.

The porch gave a little protection from the icy rain, but none from the wind, and, shaking in every limb, he leaned in abject misery against the door. He pulled himself together after a time and stumbled round to the back door. Locked! And all the lower windows were shuttered. He made his way back to the porch, and, crouching there in hopeless misery, waited for the woman to return.

He had a dim memory, when he awoke, of somebody questioning him, and then of being half pushed, half carried upstairs to bed. There was something wrong with his head and his chest and he was trembling violently, and very cold. Somebody was speaking.

" You must have taken leave of your senses," said the voice of Hannah. " I thought you were dead."

He forced his eyes to open. " Doctor," he muttered, " doctor."

" Out on a bad case," said Hannah. " I waited till I was tired of waiting, and then came along. Good thing for you I did. He'll be round first thing this morning. He ought to be here now."

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She bustled about, tidying up the room, his leaden eyes following her as she collected the beef-tea and other things on a tray and carried them out.

"Nice thing I did yesterday," she remarked, as she came back. "Left the missus's bedroom window open. When I opened the door this morning I found that beautiful Chippendale glass of hers had blown off the table and smashed to pieces. Did you hear it?"

Goddard made no reply. In a confused fashion he was trying to think. Accident or not, the fall of the glass had served its purpose. Were there such things as accidents? Or was Life a puzzle—a puzzle into which every piece was made to fit?

Fear and the wind . . . no: conscience and the wind . . . had saved the woman. He must get the powder back from her drawer . . . before she discovered it and denounced him. The medicine . . . he must remember not to take it . . .

He was very ill, seriously ill. He must have taken a chill owing to that panic flight into the garden. Why didn't the doctor come? He had come . . . at last . . . he was doing something to his chest . . . it was cold.

Again . . . the doctor . . . there was something he wanted to tell him . . . Hannah and a powder . . . what was it?

Later on he remembered, together with other things that he had hoped to forget. He lay watching an endless procession of memories, broken at times by a glance at the doctor, the nurse, and Hannah, who were all standing near the bed regarding him.

They had been there a long time, and they were all very quiet. The last time he looked at Hannah was the first time for months that he had looked at her without loathing and hatred. Then he knew that he was dying.

* * *

ENVOY

An old Shropshire couple had lived a cat-and-dog life and had not spoken to each other for years. In course of time the husband fell ill and lay dying. His wife, anxious for a reconciliation before it was too late, decided to make the first advance. She went upstairs to the old man's bedside and, breaking the long, long silence, said, "Aaron, where does thee want to be buried?"

The answer came back without hesitation and in a voice full of malice: "Atop o' thee."

G. Mary Malcolm, in *The Countryman*

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THIS GENTLE ART

No life so happie and so pleasant, as the life of a well-governed Angler

IZAAK WALTON

Down and back at day dawn,
Tramp from lake to lake,
Washing brain and heart clean
Every step we take.
Leave to Robert Browning
Beggars, fleas, and vines ;
Leave to mournful Ruskin
Popish Apennines,
Dirty stones of Venice,
And his gas lamps seven,
We've the stones of Snowdon
And the lamps of heaven.

CHARLES KINGSLEY,
Letters and Memories, August, 1856

Venomously Disposed

I will write about graylings. I will most venomously abuse them.

There are two kinds of grayling, big graylings and little graylings.

And first, of the big kind.

Some liar once said that the grayling has a tender mouth.

Everyone who has since treated of this fish has repeated the lie.

I shall not. The grayling has a mouth like an umbrella ring. Once your hook is embedded there it is almost impossible to get it out. By the time you have got it out the grayling is almost dead. But not absolutely. If she were there would be comparatively little to worry you. You would only have a grayling on your conscience.

But it is June. It becomes necessary to restore your grayling to life.

Therefore, while the great trout rise all about you, gulping down the Mayflies, you grovel on your belly, and nurse your capture back to consciousness.

You hold her head upstream and you wave her about in the water for several minutes, while she moves her mouth and gills slowly, deliberately. Then you let her go. Instantly she turns upside-down and begins to float away. Her eye meets yours, glassily, reproach-

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fully. Her martyred air distracts you. You scoop her out with the net and repeat the performance.

The trout go on rising busily.

Very likely the grayling weighs three or four pounds. She is a glorious fish. To exhibit such a fish at the end of the day would, in September, make your name. In June, however, it would cover you with infamy. Of this, the grayling is perfectly well aware.

She is quite comfortable. She knows herself safe. She is in no hurry. You cannot leave her. She prolongs the experience, slowly moving her mouth, slowly opening and closing her gills.

If you were not a fool and a sportsman you would beat her on the skull and throw her in a bed of nettles. But you prop her up between two reeds. Deliberately she turns over.

The trout go on rising.

At last she finds the fun begin to pall, and with a sluggish movement slips from between your hands and sinks to the gravel sulkily. You are free of her.

You now find that the rise of Mayfly is over.

The last insect is coming downstream. A large fish takes it. You throw to it. It takes your fly.

It is another grayling.

WILLIAM CAINE, *An Angler at Large*

The Chavender or Chub

There is a fine stuffed chavender,
A chavender or chub,
That decks the rural pavender,
The pavender or pub,
Wherein I eat my gravender,
My gravender or grub.

W. ST. LEGER

Definition

A fishing rod is a stick with a hook at one end and a fool at the other.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, 1709–1784

Mine Angle

Give me mine angle ; we'll to the river : there,
My music playing far off, I will betray
Tawny-finn'd fishes ; my bended hook shall pierce
Their slimy jaws.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Antony and Cleopatra*

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In The Bag

A man, angling in a river, caught a small Perch; which, as he was taking it off the hook, opened its mouth and begged him to throw it back into the river again, saying persuasively:

"At present I am but young and little, and consequently not so well worth your while as I shall be some time hence, when I am grown larger."

"That may be," replied the man, putting it into his basket, "but I am not one of those fools who quit a certainty in expectation of an uncertainty."

The Fables of Aesop

Both Views

A Man:- *You strange, astonished-looking, angle-faced,*
Dreary-mouthed, gaping wretches of the sea,
Gulping salt-water everlastingly,
Cold blooded, though with red your blood be graced,
And mute, though dwellers: in the roaring waste;
And you, all shapes beside, that fishy be,—
Some round, some flat, some long, all devilry,
Legless, unloving, infamously chaste:—
O scaly, slippery, wet, swift, staring wights,
What is't ye do? What life lead? eh, dull goggles? . . .

A Fish: *Amazing monster! that, for aught I know,*
With the first sight of thee didst make our race
For ever stare! O flat and shocking face,
Grimly divided from the breast below!
Thou that on dry land horribly dost go
With a split body and most ridiculous pace,
Prong after prong, disgracer of all grace,
Long-useless-finned, haired, upright, unwet, slow!

LEIGH HUNT, 1784–1859,
The Fish, the Man, and the Spirit

Retrospect

The time must come to all of us, who live long, when memory is more than prospect. An angler who has reached this stage and reviews the pleasure of life will be grateful and glad that he has been an angler, for he will look back upon days radiant with happiness, peaks and peaks of enjoyment that are not less bright because they are lit in memory by the light of a setting sun.

VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON, 1862–1933, *Fly-Fishing*

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LEGAL AID

It was hard to believe that one so harmless could achieve such unprecedented results

by FRANK O'CONNOR

DELIA CARTY came of a very respectable family. It was going as maid to the O'Gradys of Pouladuff that ruined her. That whole family was slightly touched. The old man, a national teacher, was hardly ever at home, and the daughters weren't much better. When they weren't away visiting, they had people visiting them, and it was nothing to Delia to come in late at night and find one of them plastered round some young fellow on the sofa. That sort of thing isn't good for any young girl. Like mistress like maid; inside six months she was smoking, and within a year she was carrying on with one Tom Flynn, a farmer's son. Her father, a respectable, hard-working man, knew nothing about it, for he would have realized that she was no match for one of the Flynns, and even if Ned Flynn had known, he wouldn't have thought it possible that any labourer's daughter could imagine herself a match for Tom.

Not, God knows, that Tom was any great catch. He was a big, uncouth galoot who was certain that love-making, like drink, was one of the simple pleasures his father was keeping away from him out of spite. He used to call at the house while the O'Gradys were away, and there would be Delia in one of Eileen O'Grady's frocks and with Eileen O'Grady's lipstick and powder on, doing the lady over the tea things in the parlour. Throwing a glance over his shoulder in case anyone might spot him, Tom would heave himself on to the sofa with his boots over the end.

"Begod," he'd say, "I love sofas."

"Put a cushion behind you," Delia would say.

"Oh, begod," Tom would say, making himself comfortable, "if I ever have a house of my own, 'tis unknown what sofas and cushions I'll have. Them teachers must get great money. What the hell do they go away at all for?"

Delia loved making the tea and handing it out like a real lady, but you couldn't catch Tom out like that.

"Ah, what do I want tay for?" he would say with a doubtful glance at the cup. "Haven't you any whisky? Ould O'Grady

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must have gallons of it . . . Leave it there on the table. Why the hell don't they have proper mugs with handles a man could get a grip on? Is that taypot silver? Pity I'm not a teacher!"

It was only natural for Delia to show him the bedrooms and the dressing-tables with the three mirrors on, the way you could see yourself from all sides, and Tom threw himself incredulously on the low double bed with his hands under his head and cried, "Springs! Begod, 'tis like a car!"

What the springs gave rise to was entirely the O'Gradys' fault since no one but themselves would have left a house in a lonesome part to a girl of nineteen to mind. The only surprising thing was that it lasted two years without Delia showing any signs of it. It probably took Tom that time to find the right way.

But when he did he got into a terrible state. It was hardly in him to believe that a harmless poor devil like himself that no one bothered about could achieve such unprecedented results on a girl, but when it was borne in on him he knew right well what would happen. His father would first beat hell out of him, and then throw him out and leave the farm to his nephews.

There being no hope of conciliating his father, Tom turned his attention to God, who, though He shared Ned Flynn's views about fellows and girls, was supposed to have a bit of nature in Him. Tom stopped seeing Delia, to persuade God that he was reforming and that anyway it wasn't his fault. Left to himself he could be a decent, good-living young fellow, but the Carty girl was a forward, deceitful hussy that led him on instead of putting him off the way any well-bred girl would have done. Between lipsticks, sofas and tay in the parlour, it was a great wonder to Tom that she hadn't got him into worse trouble.

Delia had to tell her mother, and Mrs. Carty had to go to Father Corcoran to see could he induce Tom to marry her. Father Corcoran was a tall, testy old man, who even at the age of sixty-five couldn't make out for the life of him what young fellows saw in girls that made them hover round them, but if he didn't know much about lovers he knew a lot about farmers.

"Wisha, Mrs. Carty," he said crankily, "how could I get him to marry her? Wouldn't you have a bit of sense? Some little financial arrangement, maybe, so that she could leave the parish and not be a cause of scandal—I might be able to do that."

He had an interview with Ned Flynn who, by this time, had got Tom's version of the story and prepared his plan of campaign.

"I don't know, father," said Ned, stroking his smooth, bald brow with a die-away air, "I don't know what you could do at all."

"Wisha, Mr. Flynn," said the priest, who when it came to the pinch had more nature than twenty Flynns, "wouldn't you do

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the handsome thing and let him marry her before it goes any further ? "

" I don't see how much further it could go, father," said Ned.

" It could become a scandal," said the priest.

" I'm afraid 'tis that already, father," said Ned.

" And after all," said Father Corcoran, forcing himself to put in a good word for one of the unfortunate sex whose very existence was a mystery to him, " is she any worse than the rest of the girls that are going ? Bad is the best of them, from what I see, and Delia is a great deal better than most."

" That's not my information at all, father," said Ned, looking like The Heart Bowed Down.

" That's a very serious statement, Mr. Flynn," said Father Corcoran, giving him a challenging look.

" It can be proved, father," said Ned gloomily. " Of course, I'm not denying that the boy was foolish, but the cleverest can be caught."

" You astonish me, Mr. Flynn," said Father Corcoran, realizing that he wasn't even going to get a subscription. " Of course, I'm not disputing it, but 'twill cause a terrible scandal."

" I'm as sorry for that as you are, father," said Ned, " but I have to think of my son's future."

Then, of course, the fun began. Foolish to the last, the O'Gradys wanted to keep Delia till it was pointed out to them that the old man would be bound to get the blame. After that, her father had to be told. Dick Carty knew exactly what became a devoted father, and beat Delia till he had to be hauled off her by the neighbours. He was a man who loved to sit in his garden of an evening, reading his paper ; now, he felt he owed it to himself not to be seen enjoying himself, so he sat instead over the fire and brooded. The more he brooded, the angrier he got. But seeing that, with the best will in the world, he couldn't beat Delia every time he got angry, he turned his attention to the Flynns.

Ned Flynn, that contemptible bosthoon, had slighted one of the Cartys in a parish where they had lived for hundreds of years with unblemished reputations ; the Flynns, as everybody knew, being mere upstarts and outsiders without a date on their gravestones before 1850—nobodies !

He brought Delia along to see Jackie Canty, the solicitor. Jackie was a little man with thin lips, a pointed nose and a pince-nez that wouldn't stop in place, and he listened with grave enjoyment to the story of Delia's misconduct. " And what happened then, please ? " he asked in his shrill sing-song, looking at the floor and trying hard not to burst out in a giggle of delight. " The devils ! "

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he thought. "The devils!" It was as close as Jackie was ever likely to get to the facts of life, an opportunity not to be missed.

"Anything in writing?" he sang, looking at her over the pince-nez. "Any letters? Any documents?"

"Only a couple of notes I burned," said Delia, who thought him a very queer sort of man, and no wonder.

"Pity!" said Jackie with an admiring smile. "A smart man! Oh, a very smart man!"

"Ah, 'tisn't that at all," said Delia uncomfortably, "only that he had no occasion for writing."

"Ah, Miss Carty," cried Jackie in great indignation, looking at her challengingly through the specs while his voice took on a steely ring, "a gentleman in love always finds plenty of occasion for writing. He's a smart man; your father might succeed in an action for seduction, but if 'tis defended 'twill be a dirty case."

"Mr. Canty," said her father solemnly, "I don't mind how dirty it is so long as I get justice." He stood up, a powerful man of six feet and held up his clenched fist. "Justice is what I want. That's the sort I am. I keep myself to myself and mind my own business but, give me a cut, and I'll fight in a bag, tied-up."

"Don't forget, Dick," Jackie wailed mournfully, "Ned Flynn has the money."

"Mr. Canty," said Dick with a dignity verging on pathos, "you know me?"

"I do, Dick, I do."

"I'm living in this neighbourhood, man and boy, fifty years, and I owe nobody a ha'penny. If it took me ten years, breaking stones by the road, I'd pay it back, every penny."

"I know, Dick," moaned Jackie, "but there's other things as well. There's your daughter's reputation. Do you know what they'll do? They'll go into court and swear someone else was the father."

"Tom could never say that," cried Delia despairingly. "The tongue would rot in his mouth."

Jackie had no patience at all with this chit of a girl, telling him his business. He sat back with a weary air, his arm over the back of the chair.

"That statement has no foundation," he said icily. "There is no record of any such thing happening to a witness. If there was, the inhabitants of Ireland would have considerably less to say for themselves. You would be surprised the things respectable people will say in the witness box. Rot in their mouths, indeed! Ah, dear me, no! With documents, of course, it would be different, but it is only our word against theirs. Can it be proved that you

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weren't knocking round with another man at that time, Miss Carty?"

"Ah, indeed, I was doing nothing of the sort," said Delia indignantly. "I swear to God I wasn't, Mr. Canty. I hardly spoke to a fellow the whole time, only when Tom and myself might have a row, and I'd go out with Timmy Martin."

"Timmy Martin!" Canty cried dramatically, pointing an accusing finger at her. "There is the man!"

"But Tom did the same with Betty Daly," cried Delia on the point of tears, "and he only did it to spite me. I swear there was nothing else in it, Mr. Canty, nor he never accused me of it."

"Mark my words," chanted Jackie with a mournful smile, "he'll make up for lost time now."

In that matter he showed more foresight than Delia gave him credit for. After the baby was born and the action begun, Tom and his father went to town to interview their solicitor, Peter Humphreys. Peter, who knew all he wanted to know about the facts of life, liked the case much less than Jackie. A cross-eyed, full-blooded man who had made his money when law was about land, not love, he thought it a terrible come-down. Besides, he didn't think it nice to be listening to such things.

"And so, according to you, Timmy Martin is the father?" he asked Tom.

"Oh, I'm not swearing he is," said Tom earnestly, giving himself a heave in his chair and crossing his legs. "How the hell could I? All I'm saying is that I wasn't the only one, and what's more, she boasted of it. Boasted of it, begod!" he added with a look of astonishment at such female depravity.

"Before witnesses?" asked Peter, his eyes doing a double cross with hopelessness.

"As to that," said Tom with great solemnity, looking over his shoulder for an open window he could spit through, "I couldn't swear."

"But you understood her to mean Timmy Martin?"

"I'm not accusing Timmy Martin at all," said Tom, in great alarm, seeing how the processes of the law were tending to involve him in a row with the Martins, who were a turbulent family with ways of getting their own back unknown to any law. "Timmy Martin is one man she used to be around with. It might be Timmy Martin or it might be someone else, or, what's more," he added with the look of a man who has had a sudden revelation, "it might be more than one." He looked from Peter to his father and back again to see what effect the revelation was having, but like other revelations it didn't seem to be going down too well. "Begod," he said, giving himself another heave, "it might be any God's

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number . . . But as to that," he added cautiously, " I wouldn't like to swear."

" Nor indeed, Tom," said his solicitor with a great effort at politeness, " no one would advise you. You'll want a good counsel."

" Begod, I suppose I will," said Tom with a sort of astonished resignation to think there would be people so bad as to doubt his word.

There was great excitement in the village when it became known that the Flynns were having the Roarer Cooper as counsel. Even as a first-class variety turn, Cooper could always command attention, and everyone knew that the rights and wrongs of the case would be relegated to their proper position while the little matter of Eileen O'Grady's best frock received the attention it deserved.

On the day of the hearing the court was crowded. Tom and his father were sitting with Peter Humphreys, waiting for Cooper, while Delia and her father were talking to Jackie Canty and their own counsel, Ivers. He was a well-built young man with a high brow, black, oiled hair and half-closed, red-tinged, sleepy eyes, who talked in a bland drawl.

" You're not worrying, are you ? " he said to Delia. " Don't be a bit afraid, child. I'll look after you . . . I suppose there's no chance of them settling, Jackie ? " he whispered to Canty.

" Musha, what chance would there be ? " asked Canty scoldingly. " Don't you know what sort they are ? "

" I'll have a word with Cooper myself," said Ivers. " Dan isn't as bad as he looks." And away he went to talk to a coarse-looking man in wig and gown who had just come in. To say he wasn't as bad as he looked was no great compliment. He had a face that was almost a square with a big jaw and blue eyes in wicked little slits that made deep dents across his cheek-bones.

" Good morrow, Dan," drawled Ivers, " as you won't say it yourself, you old devil, you ! What about settling this case of ours ? "

Cooper didn't even return the look; apparently he wasn't responsive to charm.

" Did you ever know me to settle when I could fight ? " he growled.

" Not when you could fight your match," said Ivers. " You don't consider this misfortunate girl your match ? "

" We'll soon see what sort of girl she is," replied Cooper complacently, as his eyes fell on the Flynns. " Tell me," he whispered, " what did she see in my client ? "

" What you saw yourself when you were her age, of course," said Ivers with a smile. " You don't mean there wasn't a girl in a

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tobacconist's shop that you thought came down from Heaven with the purpose of consoling you ? "

" They had nothing in writing," said Cooper gravely. " And, unlike your client, I never saw double."

" For Heaven's sake, man, you don't believe that yarn, do you ? " Ivers said impatiently.

" That's one of the things I'm going to enquire into," said Cooper.

" I can save you the trouble. She was too fond of him."

" Ah ! " snorted Cooper as though this were a good joke. " And I suppose that's why she's trying to squeeze the cash out of him ? "

" The girl doesn't care if she never got a penny," said Ivers.

" A miracle, begob ! "

" What miracle ? " said Ivers. " Don't you know yourself what's behind it—a respectable father ? Two respectable fathers. The trouble about marriage in this country, Dan Cooper, is that the fathers always insist on doing the coorting."

" Hah ! " grunted Cooper, a bit more uncertainly. " Show me this paragon of the female sex, Ivers."

" In the brown hat beside Canty," said Ivers without looking round. " Come on, you old devil, and stop trying to pretend you're Buffalo Bill. It's enough, going through what she had to go through. I don't want her to go through any more."

" And why in the name of God do you come to me ? " asked Cooper in sudden indignation. " What the hell do you take me for ? A Society for Protecting Fallen Women ? Why didn't the priest make him marry her ? "

" When the Catholic Church can make a farmer marry a labourer's daughter the Kingdom of God will be at hand," said Ivers. " I'm surprised at you, Dan Cooper, not knowing better at your age."

" And what are the neighbours doing here if she has nothing to hide ? " asked Cooper.

" Who said she had nothing to hide ? " Ivers asked lightly, as he threw in his cards. " Haven't you daughters of your own ? You know she played the fine lady in the O'Gradys' frocks. If 'tis any information to you, she wore their jewellery as well."

" Ivers," said Cooper, " you're a young man of great plausibility, but you can spare your charm on me. I have my client's interests to consider. Did she sleep with the other fellow ? "

" She didn't," said Ivers promptly.

" Do you believe that ? "

" As I believe in my own mother."

" The faith that moves mountains," said Cooper despondently. " How much are ye asking ? "

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"Two hundred and fifty," replied Ivers, getting shaky.

"Merciful God Almighty!" said Cooper, turning his eyes to the ceiling. "As if any responsible Irish court would put that price on a girl's virtue! Still, it might be as well. I'll see what I can do."

He moved ponderously across the court with two big arms outstretched like wings and shepherded the Flynns into the farther corridor.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds?" gasped Ned, going white. "But where in God's name would I get that money?"

"My dear Mr. Flynn," said Cooper with coarse amiability, "that's only half the yearly allowance his Lordship makes the young lady that obliges him, and she's not a patch on the girl in court. After a lifetime of experience I can assure you that for two years' fornication with a fine girl like that he won't charge you a penny less than five hundred."

Peter Humphreys' eyes almost grew straight with the shock of such reckless slander on a blameless judge. He didn't know what had come over the Roarer. But that wasn't the worst of it. When the Flynns were leaving he went up to them again.

"You can believe me when I say you did the right thing, Mr. Flynn," he said. "I never like cases involving good-looking girls. But tell me, why wouldn't your son marry her now that he's about it?"

"Marry her?" echoed Ned, who hadn't yet got over the shock of having to pay two hundred and fifty pounds for a little matter he could have compounded for with the priest for fifty. "A thing like that?"

"With two hundred and fifty pounds, man," said Cooper earnestly. "'Tisn't every day you'll pick up a daughter-in-law with that . . . What do you say to the girl yourself?" he asked Tom.

"Oh, begod, she's all right," said Tom.

Tom looked different. It was partly relief that he wouldn't have to perjure himself, partly astonishment to see his father so swiftly overthrown. His face said, "The world is wide."

"Ah, Mr. Flynn," whispered Cooper scornfully, "wouldn't you be a damn fool to let all that good money out of the family?"

Leaving Ned gasping, he went on to where Dick Carty, aglow with conceit and malice, was receiving congratulations. There were no congratulations for Delia, standing beside him. She felt a big paw on her arm and looked up to see the Roarer.

"Are you still fond of that boy?" he asked in a whisper.

"I have reason to be, haven't I?" she retorted bitterly.

"You have," he replied with no great sympathy. "The best.

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I got you that money so that you could marry him if you wanted to. Do you want to ? "

Her eyes filled with tears as she thought of the poor broken china of an idol that was being offered her now.

" Once a fool, always a fool," she said sullenly.

" Good girl, good girl ! " he said approvingly. " You might make a man of him yet. I don't know what the law in this country is coming to. Get him away to hell out of this till I find Michael Ivers and talk to your father."

The two lawyers made the match at Johnnie Desmond's pub, and Johnnie said it was like nothing so much as a mission, with one of them roaring and threatening hell fire and the other piping away about the joys of Heaven. Ivers was always recognized as a weak man, so the marriage did him no great harm, but, of course, it was a terrible come-down for a true Roarer, and Cooper's reputation has never been the same since then.

* * *

MAN

And they say also that god formed no creature for to enhabyte the Worlde Wyser than man for there is no condycion nor maner in a beest but that it is founde comprehended in man. Naturally a man is hardy as the Lyon. True and Worthy as the ox. Large and lyberall as the Cocke. Avarycyous as the Dogge. Harde and Swyfte as the Hart. Debonayre and true as the Dove. Dolorous and gylefull as the Fox. Symple and mylde as the Lame. Shrewde as the Ape. Lyght as the Horse. Softe and pyteable as the heer. Deer and precyous as the Olyphaunte. Good and holsome as the Unycorne. Vyle and slouthfull as the Asse. Fayre and proude as the Pecocke. Glotonous as the Wolfe. Envyous as the Bytche. Rebell and inobedient as the Nyghtyngale. Humble as the Pegyon. Fell and Folysshe as the Oustryche. Profytable as the Pysmyre. Dyssolute and Vayagounde as the Gote. Spytefull as the Fesaunt. Softe and meke as the Chekyn. Movable and varying as the Fysshe. Lecherous as the Bore. Strong and puyssaunt as the Camell. Traytoure as the Mule. Advysed as the Mouse. Resonable as an Aungell. And therefore he is called the lytell Worlde: or elles he is called all creatures, for he taketh part of all.

The Compost of Ptholomeus Prynce of Astronomye (1535)

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Magic Cloak

IF, from the woven peacock silk
And broideries of Cathay,
My dearest choice were offered me,
I'd choose the magic grey
Of thin forgotten moons, of rain,
Of sea-salt-lustred shell,
To weave invisibility,
And it would serve me well,
For I would wrap myself in it
And drift as light as smoke
Back to a place I know, I know
Safe in my magic cloak . . .
Being invisible, I'd find
The dream and the desire
Just as they were—the yellow rose
Yet on the same green briar.
Under the still-green leaves I'd stand,
And lightly as a feather,
Someone would touch my hand.
We'd take
A path of moon, together.

YETZA GILLESPIE

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THE NEEDLE'S EYE

"Look," she said, "a real pirate's booty wrenched from the throats of dead Spanish ladies"

by ELLERY QUEEN

THIS being a tale of pirates and stolen treasure, it is a gratification to record that it all happened in that season of the year to which the moonstone and the poppy are traditionally dedicated.

For the moonstone is a surprisingly moral object. To its lawful owner it brings nothing but good: held in the mouth at the full of the moon, it reveals the future; it heats the lover and it cools the heated; it cures epilepsy; it fructifies trees; and so on. But rue upon him who lays thievish hands on it, for then it invokes the black side of its nature and brings down upon the thief nothing but evil. Such exact justice is unarguably desirable in a story of piracy which, while boasting no moonstones—although there were buckets of other gems—did reach its apogee in Augustus Caesar's month, which is the moonstone's month. And the poppy springs from the blood of the slain, its scarlet blooms growing thickest on battlefields and in places of carnage. So it is a poetic duty to report that there is murder in this August tale, too.

The sea-robber involved was master of the galley *Adventure*, a Scotsman who was thoroughly hanged in London's Execution Dock two centuries and a half ago—alas, on a day in May—and whose name ever since has stood for piracy in general. Ellery had tangled with historical characters before, but never with one so kindling as this; and it must be confessed that he embarked on the case of Captain Kidd's treasure with a relish more suitable to a small boy in his first hot pursuit of Mr. Legrand's golden *scarabaeus* than to a weary workman in words and the case-hardened son of a modern New York policeman.

And then there was Eric Ericsson.

Ericsson was that most tragic of men, an explorer in an age when nothing of original note remained on earth to be explored. He had had to content himself with being, not the first in anything, but the farthest, or the highest, or the deepest. To the known channels in the Northwest Passage, Ericsson added another. He found a peak in Sikang Province of western China, in the Amne Machin Range, which was almost a thousand feet higher than

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Everest, but he lost his instruments and his companions and Mount Everest remained on the books the highest mountain on the planet. Ericsson went farther and wider in the great Juf depression of the Sahara than the Citroën expedition, but this did not salve the nettling fact that other men had blazed the trail. And so it had gone all his life.

Now in middle age, broken in health, Ericsson rested on his bitter fame—honorary fellowships and medals from all the proper learned societies—and brooded over his memories in his New York apartment or, occasionally, at the fireside of the old stone house on the island he owned off Montauk Point, Long Island.

Ellery had heard the story of William Kidd and Ericsson's Island as a result of his first meeting with Ericsson at the Explorers' Club. Not from Ericsson—their introduction had been by the way and their conversation brief; if any discoveries had been made it was by Ericsson, who explored Ellery with far swifter economy than that explorer in other spheres would have believed possible of anyone but himself. Then the large, burned, bowed man had shuffled off, leaving Ellery to quiz his host of the evening, a cartographer of eminence. When this amiable personage mentioned Ericsson's Island and the buccaneer of the *Adventure* in adjoining breaths, Ellery's bow plunged into the wind.

"You mean you've never heard that yarn?" asked the cartographer with the incredulity of the knowledgeable man. "I thought everyone had!" And he gripped his glass and set sail.

An Ericsson had taken possession of the little island in the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century, and he had managed to hold on to it through all the proprietary conflicts of that brawling era. Along the way the Norseman acquired a royal patent which somehow weathered the long voyage of colonial and American history.

"How did Kidd know Ericsson's Island?" asked the cartographer, settling himself as if for argument. "The circumstantial evidence is good. We know that in 1691, for instance, he was awarded a hundred and fifty dollars by the council of New York for his services during the disturbances in the colony 'after the rebellion of 1688.' And then, of course, there was the treasure found on Gardiner's Island off the tip of Long Island after Kidd's arrest in 1699 on a charge of murder and piracy. On a clear day you can see Ericsson's Island from Gardiner's Island with a glass. How could he have missed it?"

"It's your story," said Ellery judicially. "Go on."

William Kidd served respectably against the French in the West Indies, the cartographer continued, and in 1695 he was in London. Recommended as fit to command a vessel for the King, Captain Kidd received the royal commission to arrest all Free-

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booters and Sea-Rovers, and he sailed the galley *Adventure* from Plymouth in 1696 into a life, not of arresting pirates, but of out-pirating them.

"The rest is history," said the cartographer, "although some of it is dubious history. We do know that in 1698 or thereabout he was in these parts in a small sloop. Well, the story has persisted for two hundred and fifty years that during this period—when Kidd deserted the *Adventure* in Madagascar and took to the sloop, eventually working his way to these waters—he paid a visit to Ericsson's Island."

"To Gardiner's Island," corrected Ellery.

"*And* Ericsson's," said his host stubbornly. "Why not? About fourteen thousand dollars was recovered from Kidd's vessel and from Gardiner's Island afterwards; there must have been a great deal more than that. Why, John Avery—'Long Ben.'—once grabbed a hundred thousand pieces of eight in a single haul, and a Mogul's daughter to boot!

"What happened to the rest of Kidd's booty? Is it likely he'd have cached it all in one place? He knew he was in for serious trouble—he tried to bribe Governor Bellomont, you'll recall. And with Ericsson's Island so handy . . ."

"What's the story?" murmured Ellery.

"Oh, that he put into the cove there with a small boat one night, by a ruse got into the Ericsson house—the original's still standing, by the way, beautifully preserved—gave Ericsson and his family fifteen minutes to get off the island, and used the place as his headquarters for a few days. When Kidd cleared out, to be seized and shipped to England shortly after, the Ericssons went back to their island—"

"And perforated it fore and aft and amidships for the treasure Kidd presumably buried there," said Ellery, trying to sound amused.

"Well, certainly," said the cartographer peevishly. "Wouldn't you have?"

"But they never found it."

"Neither they nor their heirs or assigns. But that doesn't mean it isn't there, Queen."

"Doesn't mean it is, either."

Nevertheless, Ellery went home that night feeling as if he had spent the evening in a hurricane off the Spanish Main, clinging to the wild rigging.

It was not quite two weeks later, in a mid-August spell of dry Tortugan weather, that Eric Ericsson telephoned. The explorer sounded remote, as if deep—at least six fathoms deep—affairs were on his mind.

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"Could you see me confidentially, Mr. Queen? I know you're a busy man, but if it's possible—"

"Are you calling from town, Mr. Ericsson?"

"Yes."

"You come right on over!"

Nikki could not understand Ellery's excitement. "Buried treasure," she sniffed. "A grown man."

"Women," pronounced Mr. Queen, "have no imagination."

"I suppose that's true," said his secretary coolly, "if you mean the kind that heats up at a bucket of nasty gore and a couple of rum-soaked yo-ho-hos. Who ever heard of a lady pirate?"

"Two of the bloodiest pirates in the business were Anne Bonny and Mary Read."

"Then they were no ladies!"

Twenty minutes later the doorbell rang, and Nikki admitted the owner of the island whose clamshells had once been crunched by the tread of Captain Kidd and his cut-throat crew.

"Glad you didn't waste any time getting here, Mr. Ericsson," said Ellery enthusiastically. "The sooner we get going on it—"

"You know why I'm here?" The explorer frowned.

"It doesn't take a genius to put a couple of twos together."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"Oh, come, Mr. Ericsson," laughed Ellery. "If it's Nikki you're worried about, I assure you that not only is she the custodian of all my secrets, she also has no interest whatsoever in buried treasure."

"Buried treasure?" Ericsson waved a charred hand impatiently. "That's not what I wanted to see you about."

"It's . . . not?"

"I've never put any stock in that yarn, Mr. Queen. In fact, the whole picture of Kidd as a pirate in my opinion is a myth and a historical libel. Kidd was the scape-goat of a political intrigue, I'm convinced, not a pirate at all. Dalton's book presented some pretty conclusive evidence. If it's real pirates you're after, look up Bartholomew Roberts. Roberts took over four hundred ships during his career."

"Then the story of Kidd's seizure of Ericsson's Island—?"

"He may have visited the island around 1698, but if it was to bury anything I've never seen the slightest evidence of it. Mr. Queen, I'd like to tell you why I came."

"Yes," sighed Ellery, and Nikki felt almost sorry for him.

Ericsson's problem involved romance, it appeared, but not the kind that glittered under pirate moons. His only sister, a widow, had died shortly after Ericsson's retirement, leaving a daughter.

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The explorer's meetings with his sister had been few and far between, and he had last seen her child, Inga, as a leggy creature of twelve with a purple pimple on her nose. But at the sister's funeral he found himself embraced as "Uncle Eric" by a golden Norse goddess of nineteen. His niece was alone in the world and she had clung to him. Ericsson, a bachelor, found the girl filling a need he had never dreamed existed. Inga left college and came to live with him as his ward, the consolation of his empty retirement, and the sole heir of his modest fortune.

At first they were inseparable—in Ericsson's New York household, at the stone house on the island during long week-ends. But Inga began to glow, and the moths came. They were young moths and they rather interfered. So Ericsson—selfishly, he admitted—had his yacht refurbished and sailed Inga away on a cruise of the Caribbean.

"Biggest mistake of my life," the explorer shrugged. "We called at the Bahamas, and there Inga met a young Britisher, Anthony Hobbes-Watkins, who was living a gentlemanly beachcomber sort of existence out on Lyford Bay, at the other end of New Providence Island. It was Inga's first serious love affair. I should have taken her away immediately. When I woke up, it was too late."

"Elopement?" asked Nikki hopefully.

"No, no, Miss Porter, it was a cathedral wedding. I couldn't stand in Inga's way. And I really had nothing definite to go on."

Ellery said, "There's something fishy about Hobbes-Watkins?"

"I don't know, Mr. Queen." Ericsson's heavy, burned-out face remained expressionless, but not his eyes. "That's what I want you to find out."

"What do you know about him?"

"Only what he's told me and a few things I've picked up. Commission in the R.A.F. during the war, and not much of anything since—I don't hold that against him, it's a rocky world. All the British upper class attainments—shoots well, plays an earnest game of polo, grouses about the fading star of empire; that sort of thing. Knew all the right people in Nassau; but he hadn't been there long.

"His father, a Colonel Hobbes-Watkins, came on from somewhere—England, he said—for the wedding," continued the explorer, and he shrugged again: "A stout, red, loud, horsy specimen, nearly a caricature of his type. They seem to have plenty of money, so it can't be that. But there *is* . . . something, a mystery, a vagueness about them that keeps disturbing me. They're like figures on a movie screen—you see them move, you hear them talk, but they never seem flesh and blood. Two-dimensional . . . I'm not saying

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this well," said Ericsson, flushing. "When a man's tramped mountains and deserts and jungles all his life, as I have, he develops an extra sense." He looked up. "I don't trust them."

"I suppose," said Nikki, "your niece does."

"Well, Inga's young and unsophisticated, and she's very much in love. That's what makes it so awkward. But she's become important to me, and for her sake I can't let this go on unless I'm satisfied she hasn't made some awful mistake."

"Have you noticed anything different since the wedding, Mr. Ericsson?" asked Ellery. "A change in their attitude?"

The explorer scraped the back of his neck with a limp handkerchief. Then he said defiantly, "They whisper together."

Ellery raised his brows.

But Ericsson went on doggedly. "Right after the wedding Colonel Hobbes-Watkins left for the States. On business, he said. I gave the yacht to Inga and Tony for a three-week honeymoon. On their way back they picked me up in Nassau and we sailed up to New York, meeting Tony's father here . . . On three different occasions I've come on the Hobbes-Watkinses having whispered conversations which break off like a shot.

"I don't like it, Mr. Queen. I don't like it to such an extent," said Ericsson quietly, "that I've deliberately kept us all in the city instead of doing the sensible thing in this heat and living down at the island. My island is pretty isolated, and it would make the ideal setting for a . . . Instead of which, Tony and Inga have my apartment, I'm stopping at one of my clubs, and the Colonel is sweating it out politely in a midtown hotel—business, unspecified, still keeping him in the States. But I can't hold out any longer. Inga's been after me now for weeks to shove off for the Point, and she's beginning to look at me queerly. I've had to promise we'd all go down this weekend for the rest of the summer."

"It would make the ideal setting," said Ellery, "for a what?"

"You'll think I'm cracked."

"For a what, Mr. Ericsson?"

"All right!" The explorer gripped the arms of his chair. "For a murder," he muttered.

Nikki stared. "Oh, I'm sure—" she began.

But Ellery's foot shifted and somehow crushed Nikki's little toe. "Murder of whom, Mr. Ericsson?"

"Inga! Me! Both of us—I don't know!" He controlled himself with an effort. "Maybe it's a hallucination. But I tell you those two are scoundrels and my island would be a perfect place for whatever they're up to. What I'd like you to do, Mr. Queen, is come down this weekend for an indefinite stay. Will you?"

Ellery glanced at his secretary; Nikki was often his umpire

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when he was playing the game of working. But she was regarding him with the grim smile of a spectator.

"Come down, too, Miss Porter," said the explorer, misinterpreting the glance. "Inga will love having you. Besides, your coming will make it appear purely social. I don't want Inga to have the least suspicion that . . . Don't bother about a wardrobe; we lead the most primitive life on the island. And there's plenty of room; the house has tripled its original size. About the fee, Mr. Queen—"

"We'll discuss fees," murmured Ellery, "when there's something to charge a fee for. We'll be there, Mr. Ericsson. I can't leave, however, before Saturday morning. When are you planning to go down?"

"Friday." The explorer looked worried.

"I don't imagine they'd try anything the very first night," said Ellery soothingly. "And you're not exactly helpless yourself."

"Good lord! You don't think it's myself I'm concerned about! It's Inga . . . married and . . ." Ericsson stopped abruptly. Then he smiled and rose. "Of course you're right. I'll have the launch waiting for you at Montauk Point. You don't know how this relieves me."

"But won't your niece suspect something by the mere fact of Ellery's being invited down?" asked Nikki. "Unless, Ellery, you cook up one of your stories."

"How's this?" beamed Ellery. "I met Mr. Ericsson at the Explorers' Club recently, heard the family tale about Captain Kidd's treasure, I couldn't resist it, and I'm coming down to try to solve a two-hundred-and-fifty-year-old mystery. Simple?"

"Simply perfect," exclaimed Ericsson. "Inga's had them half-believing the yarn ever since the Bahamas, and if I talk it up for the rest of the week you'll have them under your feet—they'll follow you around like tourists. See you both Saturday."

"It's simple, all right," said Nikki when the explorer had gone. "The simple truth! Shall I pack your extra cutlass, my bucko?"

Eric Ericsson and his niece met them at Montauk Point on Saturday morning and hurtled them over blue water in a noisy launch. It was hard to think of wickedness. Inga was a big solid blonde girl with the uncomplicated loveliness of the North, friendly and charming and—Nikki thought—happy as a newlywed could be. The day was stainless, the sun brilliant, the horizon picketed with racing sails; a salt breeze blew the girls' hair about, and the world looked a jolly place. Even Ericsson was composed, as if he had slept unexpectedly well or the presence of serene, golden-legged Inga gave him the strength to dissemble his fears.

"I think it's so thrilling," Inga cried over the roar of the launch.

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"And Tony and the Colonel have talked of nothing else since Uncle Eric told us why you were coming down, Mr. Queen. Do you really feel there's hope?"

"I try to," Ellery shouted. "By the way, I'm disappointed. I thought your husband and father-in-law might be with you in the launch."

"Oh, that's Uncle Eric's fault," the girl said, and the explorer smiled. "He kidnapped me before I could scream for help."

"Guilty." Ericsson's grip on the wheel gave the lie to his smile. "I don't see much of you now that you're Mrs. Hobbes-Watkins."

"Darling, I'm glad you kidnapped me. I really am." Inga looked happy.

But Nikki, the sun notwithstanding, felt a chill. Ericsson had been afraid to leave Inga alone on the island with her husband and father-in-law.

Ellery kept chattering to Inga about the paragon she had married, while Ericsson stood quietly over the wheel. Nikki could have told the great man that he was wasting his celebrated breath: the girl was in the first heaven of wedded bliss, where the beloved hangs in space clothed in perfect light and there is no past.

On the horizon rose a seaweed-hung otter with a fish in its mouth, which changed rapidly into a long low-lying island thinly wooded and running down to a white beach and a pretty cove. As the launch drew near, they made out a shed, a boathouse, and a jetty. A lank, disjointed something stuck up from the jetty like a piece of driftwood. It turned surprisingly into a one-legged old man. His left leg was gone at the knee; the trouser of his bleached, fishy jeans was pinned back over the stump; and to the stump there was strapped a crude, massive pegleg. With a skin resembling the shed's corrugated roof, a nose that was a twist of bone, crafty and secretive eyes, and a greasy bandana tied behind his ears against the sun, the peglegged old man looked remarkably like a pirate; and Nikki said so.

"That's why we call him Long John," Inga said as her uncle manoeuvred the launch towards the jetty. "At least Tony and I do. Uncle Eric calls him Fleugelheimer, or something as ridiculous, though I suppose it's his name. He's not very bright, and he has no manners at all. Hi, Long John!" she called. "Catch the line."

The old man hopped sideways with great agility and caught the line, poorly tossed, in his powerful right hand. Immediately he wheeled on Ericsson, his bony jaws grinding.

"Bloodsucker!" he yelled.

"Now, John," said the explorer with a sigh.

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"When ye givin' me more money?"

"John, we have guests . . ."

"Or d'ye want me to quit? Ye want me to quit!"

"Make the line fast," said Ericsson with a faint smile.

"I'm a poor man," whined the old pirate, obeying. Suddenly he squinted sideways at Ellery. "This the great detecative?"

"Yes, John."

"Ah!" said Long John, and he spat into the water, grinning evilly. He seemed to have forgotten all about his grievance.

"He's been on the island for years," Ericsson explained as they went up a rough path in the woods. "My caretaker. Surly old devil—not all there. He's a miser—hoards every penny I give him, and keeps dunning me for more with the regularity of a parrot. I ignore him and we get along fine."

And there was the stone house at the hump of the island's back. Clean wings stretched from a central building whose stones were grimy with weathered age. The old part of the house rose in a clapboarded tower. The tower was square, with several small windows from which, Ellery thought, the whole island and a great spread of the sea must be visible. Undoubtedly the lookout tower of the original structure.

To one side of the house someone—Ericsson, or one of his more recent forbears—had built a rough but comfortable terrace. It was paved with oyster shells and there was a huge barbecue pit.

Two men—one portly and middle-aged, the other slim and young—rose from deck chairs waving frosty glasses.

And the instant Ellery laid eyes on the Hobbes-Watkinses he knew Eric Ericsson had been right.

It was hard to say why. They were almost professionally British, especially Colonel Hobbes-Watkins, but that did not account for it; and for the rest of the day Ellery devoted himself to this riddle. He did not solve it.

On the surface the men were plausible. Inga's husband was handsome in a thin, underdone way. He slouched and lolled as if he were hopelessly tired; speech seemed forced out of him; and he drank a good deal. This was the very picture of the young post-war European—spoiled, sick, and disenchanted. Still . . . The elder Hobbes-Watkins was Colonel Blimp to the life, fussing and blustering and full of old-fashioned prejudices. A warmed-up mutton roast, as Nikki promptly dubbed him in a mumble. But there was something in the Colonel's bloated eye and occasionally in his blasting tone that had a lean and cynical energy in it, not at all in character.

During the afternoon Ellery, playing his rôle of historical

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detective, set off on a survey of the island. Inga, Tony, and the Colonel insisted on accompanying him.

Long John was fishing from a dory off the cove. When he spied them, he deliberately turned his back.

Ellery began to saunter along the beach, the others following eagerly behind.

"Needn't be bashful," he called, mindful of Inga between the two ogres at his back. "I'm merely casing the joint. Come up here, Inga."

"Casing the joint," wheezed Colonel Hobbes-Watkins. "Very good, haha! But I say, won't we trample the clues?"

"Not much danger of that, Colonel," said Ellery cheerfully, "after two and a half centuries. Inga, do join me."

"Glad I ambled along," said Tony Hobbes-Watkins in a languid voice. It sounded queerly dutiful for a groom. Ellery was conscious of the man's eyes; they kept a staring watch.

They went round the island in an hour. It was long and narrow and swelled to a ridge in the middle. The vegetation was scrubby and poor. There was no close anchorage except off the cove. None of the trees, which might have been landmarks, looked old; the island was exposed to the sea, and centuries of winter gales had kept it pruned.

"I don't suppose," Ellery asked Inga as they climbed the path back to the house in the dusk, "the story has ever had any documentation? Chart, map—anything like that?"

"Nothing that still exists. But it's said that there was once a letter or diary page or something left by the 1698 Ericsson—it's been lost, if it ever existed at all—telling about the clue in Captain Kidd's room, and of course that's been the big mystery ever since."

"Clue? Kidd's room?" exclaimed Ellery. "No one's mentioned that!"

"Didn't Eric tell you?" murmured the younger Englishman. "Fantastic fellow, Eric. No imagination."

"I wondered why you hadn't steamed up there immediately," panted the Colonel. "Fancy your uncle's not telling Mr. Queen the most exciting part of it, Inga! It's the chamber the pirate watched the sea from when he took the island over—didn't you say, my dear?"

"The tower room," said Inga, pointing through the dusk. "*That* was in the lost letter, and the reference to the clue Kidd left there."

"Clue left in the tower room?" Ellery peered through the twilight hungrily. "And that's the original room up there, Inga?"

"Yes."

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"What was the clue?"

But the terrace and Long John at the barbecue pit intervened; and since the one-legged caretaker was brandishing a veritable trident as he glowered at the latecomers, Ellery was not answered.

They had dinner.

A great moon rose, and the air turned chilly. Ellery wandered to the edge of the terrace with his plate, and a moment later Eric Ericsson joined him.

"Well?" the explorer asked.

"Nothing tangible, Mr. Ericsson. But I agree—there's something in the wind."

"What about tonight? I've put you next to the Colonel's room, and I have an automatic, but Inga . . . alone with . . ."

"I've already fixed that. Nikki is all things to all men, and tonight she's going to be so nervous in this primeval setting that she'll just have to sleep with somebody. Since she's had a strict upbringing, that means with Inga, the only other female here. A dirty trick to play on a new husband," said Ellery dryly, "but Tony can console himself with the prospect of a good night's sleep in the room next to mine." Ericsson pressed Ellery's arm rather pathetically. "For the rest of the evening, Mr. Ericsson," murmured Ellery, "please follow my lead. I'm going to be treasure-hunting like mad."

"Ha, caught you whispering," said a voice at Ellery's elbow; it was young Hobbes-Watkins with a glass in his hand. "Pumping Eric about that clue, eh, Queen?"

"We were just getting round to it," said Ellery. "Girls couldn't take it, I see." Inga and Nikki were gone.

"Driven to cover by the mosquitoes and gnats," boomed the Colonel, slapping himself. "Lovely children, but females, what? Ah, there, you dog, don't shake your head at your old bachelor father! The moon's bloody, and it's the hour for high adventure, didn't some chap say? About that clue, Mr. Queen . . ."

"Yes, you never said a word to me about Captain Kidd's room, Mr. Ericsson," said Ellery reproachfully. "What's all this about a clue he's supposed to have left up there?"

"It's characteristically cryptic," said the explorer, pouring coffee. "The legend says that just before Kidd was to be hanged in London he sent a letter to my ancestor admitting that he'd buried a treasure on Ericsson's Island in '98, and saying that 'to find it you must look through the eye of the needle'."

"Eye of the needle," said Ellery. "Eye of which needle?"

"Ah!" said Colonel Hobbes-Watkins ominously. "There's the rub, as the Bard says. No one knows—eh, Ericsson?"

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"I'm afraid not, Colonel. And no one ever will, because it's all moonshine!"

"Don't see why you say that, Eric, at all," said Tony, almost energetically. "Could have been a needle!"

"Even if there had been," Ericsson smiled, "two hundred and fifty years make a large haystack."

"One moment!" said Ellery. "Look through the eye of the needle *in the tower room*, Mr. Ericsson?"

"That's how it goes."

"What's in that room?"

"Nothing at all. Just four walls, a floor, and a ceiling. I assure you, Mr. Queen, everything's been tried—unsuccessfully—from hunting for a peculiar rock formation to conjuring up a tree fork viewed from a certain angle from the windows."

Ellery stared up at the tower. Suddenly he sprang to his feet. "How do I get up there?"

"There's the sleuth for you!" cried Colonel Hobbes-Watkins, hurling himself from his chair. "Been itching to have a go at that ruddy room myself!"

"But Eric's been so discouraging," murmured his son.

Nikki and Inga had their heads together before the fireplace, where Long John was laying a fire. Inga fell behind to say something to her young husband, who glanced at Nikki and shrugged.

The explorer led the way up a tiny narrow coiling staircase, holding a kerosene lamp high. "The tower's never been electrified," he called down, his deep voice reverberating. "Better use those torches or you'll break your necks on these stairs."

"Eeee," said Nikki convincingly; but it was only a dried-up wasps' nest. The stairs sagged perilously at every step.

The climb ended in a little landing and a heavy door of blackened oak and hand-forged iron. Ericsson set his big shoulder to the door. It gave angrily. The lamp bobbed off.

"A couple of you had better stay on the landing. This floor may not hold up under so much weight. Come in, Mr. Queen."

It was scarcely more than a large closet with miniature square windows. A floor of dirt-glazed boards, undulant like the sea; a raftered ceiling only a few inches above the men's heads; and four papered walls. And that was all, except for dust and cobwebs. The windows, of imperfectly blown glass, were closed.

"Open them, Ellery," choked Nikki from the doorway. "You can't breathe up here."

"You can't open them," said Inga. "They've been stuck fast for six generations."

Ellery stood in the middle of the room looking about.

"Aren't you going to get down on all fours, Mr. Queen?"

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bellowed the Colonel from the landing. "Like the fellow from Baker Street?"

"I find these walls much more interesting."

But the only thing Nikki could see on the walls was the wallpaper. The paper showed an imitation coloured marble design on a grainy background—ugly as sin, Nikki thought, and even uglier for being faded and mildewed in great patches.

Ellery was at one of the walls now, actually caressing it, holding the lamp close to the marbled paper. Finally he began at a corner and went over the paper inch by inch, from ceiling to floor. At one point he examined something for a long time. Then he resumed his deliberate inspection, and he neither spoke nor looked around until he had completed his tour of the room.

"This wallpaper," he said. "Do you know, Mr. Ericsson, what you have here?"

"Dash it all, sir," interrupted the Colonel explosively, "are you treasure-hunting, or what?"

"The wallpaper?" Ericsson frowned. "All I know about it is that it's very old."

"To be exact, late seventeenth century," said Ellery. "This is genuine flock paper, made by the famous Dunbar of Aldermanbury. It's probably quite valuable."

"There's a treasure for you," wailed Inga.

"If so," shrugged her uncle, "it's the first I've run across on the island."

"There may be a second," said Ellery. "If we look through the eye of the needle."

"Don't tell me, Queen," said Inga's husband with what might have been animation, "you've spotted something."

The Hobbes-Watkinses made admiring sounds and Inga embraced her spouse. The explorer seemed stunned.

"Do you mean to say," demanded Nikki in a loud voice, "that you walk into a strange room and in ten minutes solve a mystery that's baffled everybody for two hundred and fifty years? Come, come, Mr. Q!"

"It's still only theory," said Ellery apologetically. "Inga, may I borrow a broom?"

"A broom!"

Inga, Tony, and the Colonel shouted chaotically down the tower stairs for Long John to fetch the best broom on the premises. Then they ran into the little room and danced around Ellery, reckless of the aged floor.

"If the story is true at all," Ellery said, "Kidd couldn't have meant it literally when he instructed your ancestor, Mr. Ericsson, to 'look through the eye of the needle'. The early treasure-

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hunters saw that at once, or they wouldn't have looked for peculiar rock and tree formations. They just didn't look close enough to home. It was under their noses all the time."

"*What* was under their noses all the time?" asked Nikki.

"The marble design on this wallpaper. Marble's unique characteristic is its veining. Look at these veins in the pattern. Some are long and thin, tapering to a point—"

"*Like needles,*" said the explorer slowly.

Everyone began scuttling along a wall.

"But where's one with an opening?" shrieked Inga. "One with—with an eye!"

"An eye, an eye," mumbled the Colonel feverishly. "There must be one with an eye!"

"There is," said Ellery. "Just one, and here it is near this window."

And while they stared in awe at the place on the wall beyond the tip of Ellery's forefinger, Long John's boot and pegleg stumped into the tower room.

"Broom." He flung it.

Ellery seized it, placed the end of the broom handle on the open space in the needle-shaped vein, said with piety, "Let us pray," and pushed.

There was a ripping sound and the broom handle burst through the wallpaper and sank into the wall. Ellery kept pushing gently. The handle slid out of sight up to the head.

Ellery withdrew the broom and stepped back.

"Mr. Ericsson," he said, not without emotion, "the honour of the first look is yours."

"Well, don't just crouch there, Uncle Eric!" moaned Inga. "What do you see?"

"Can you see *anything*?"

"But he must—there's a bright moon!"

"Now, my dears, give him a chance—"

"I see," said Eric Ericsson slowly, "a bit of the north-east shoreline. You know the place, Inga. It's that postage-stamp patch of beach with the slight overhang of flat rock. Where you've sunbathed."

"Let mē see!"

"Let me!"

"It can't be. By George, not really—"

"What luck!"

There was a great deal of confusion.

Ellery said rapidly, "Mr. Ericsson, since you know just where the place is, take a hurricane lamp and a stake and get down there.

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We'll keep watch through the peephole. When we 've got your lamp in the centre of our sight, we'll signal with a torch three times from this window. Drive your stake into the sand at that point, and we'll join you there with shovels."

"I'll get 'em!" shrieked a voice; and they turned to see Long John's peg vanishing.

Fifteen minutes later, with Inga sprinting ahead, they thrashed through the scrub towards the explorer's light.

They found Ericsson standing on an outcrop of silvery rock, smiling. "No hurry," he said. "And no treasure—not till low tide tomorrow morning, anyway."

Ericsson's stake protruded from four and half a feet of ocean.

Nikki found herself able to play the part of a nervous city female with no difficulty at all. How could Inga *sleep*, she thought as she thrashed about in the twin bed. When in a few hours she was going to be the heiress of a pirate's treasure. The . . . *piracy* of that pirate . . . to bury it so that for half the elapsed time the Atlantic rolled over it . . . He ought to be hanged. . .

Then Nikki remembered that he *had* been hanged; and that was her last thought until a hand clamped over her mouth and a light flashed briefly into her eyes and Ellery's voice said affectionately in her ear, "You certainly sleep soundly. Get into some clothes and join me outside. And don't wake anyone or I'll give you a taste of the cat."

Nikki slipped out of the house into a dead and lightless world. She could not even make out the terrace. But Ellery rose out of the void and led her down the path and into the woods, his grip forbidding noise. Not until they had gone several hundred yards did he turn on his torch, and even then he cupped its beam.

"Is it all right to talk now?" Nikki asked coldly. "What time is it? Where are we going? And why are you practically naked? And do you think this is cricket? After all, Ellery, it's not your treasure."

"It's not quite four, we're getting the jump on our friends, I expect it will be wet and mucky work, and pirate loot calls for pirate methods. Would you rather go back to your hot little bed?"

"No," said Nikki. "Though it all sounds pretty juvenile to me. How can you dig through sea water?"

"Low tide at 4.29 a.m.—I checked with a tide table at the house."

Nikki began to feel excited all over again, especially when they came out on the flat rock and saw Ericsson's stake below them lapped by a mere inch or two of water.

The sun made its appearance with felicity. The first sliver of

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fried-egg radiance slipped over the edge of the sea's blue plate just as Ellery's spade rang a sort of breakfast bell. Nikki, who was flat on the wet sand with her head in the hole, and Ellery, whose salted hair bobbed a foot below Nikki's chin, responded to the sound with hungry cries.

"It's a metal box, Nikki!"

"Whee!"

"*Don't* come down here! Get that windlass ready."

"Where? What? What's a windlass?"

"That drum up there for hoisting!" Before turning in the previous night the men had dragged all the portable paraphernalia they could find in the shed down to the site of the treasure. "And unwind the line and pay it down to me—"

"Yaaaaa-hoo!" Nikki ran around in her little bare feet madly.

Twenty minutes later they knelt panting on the sand at the edge of the hole, staring at a brassbound iron chest with a fat convex lid. It was a black and green mass of corruption. Shreds of crumbled stuff told where leather had once been strapped. And the chest was heavy—

"Can you open it?" whispered Nikki.

Ellery set the heels of his hands on the edge of the lid and got his shoulders ready. The lid cracked off like a rotten nutshell.

Nikki gulped. The celestial egg was sunny side up now, and beneath it a million little frying lights danced.

"Diamonds," said Nikki dreamily. "Rubies. Emeralds. Pearls. Sapphires. So pretty. Look, Ellery. The booty of a real pirate. Wrenched from the throats and arms of dead Spanish ladies."

"And the jewels in turn wrenched from their settings," muttered Ellery, "most of which were probably melted down. But here are some they overlooked. An empty gold setting. A silver one—"

"Here is another silver one, Ellery."

"That isn't silver . . ." Ellery picked it up.

"And look at those old coins! What's this one?"

"What?"

"This coin!"

"Oh? *El peso duro.* A piece of eight."

"Gosh." Nikki suddenly thrust both hands into the chest.

And at this precise moment, through the young air of the island's morning, there came a dull crack, like the faraway slam of a door, and quickly after—so quickly it sounded like an echo of the first—another.

Ellery vaulted across the hole and leaped on to the flat rock. "Nikki, those were gunshots—"

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"Huh?" Nikki was still on a quarterdeck with her jewels. "But Ellery—the treasure! You can't leave—"

But Ellery was gone.

They found Eric Ericsson in a robe and slippers lying in the doorway of Captain Kidd's roost, across the sill. He had tumbled head first into the empty room. In his right hand there was a .38 automatic pistol.

When they turned him over they saw a red hole in his forehead and red thickening fluid on the floor where the forehead had rested.

His body was still warm.

Ellery got up, and he said to the Hobbes-Watkinses and the marble-faced girl and the one-legged caretaker and Nikki, "We will go downstairs now and we will bar the tower door." So they went downstairs quietly, and Ellery excused himself for a moment and disappeared in his room, and when he appeared again he had a police revolver in his hand. "Nikki, you and Inga will take the launch and go over to the mainland and notify the Coast Guard and the police; there's no phone here. You won't come back until someone in authority can come with you. You gentlemen will wait here with me—with me, that is, and my shooting iron."

Late that day Ellery came downstairs from the tower room and conferred with the Coast Guard officer and the police captain from the mainland. Finally he said, "I appreciate that. It's something I owe poor Ericsson," and he waited until the people were brought in and seated before him.

The hearty bloat had gone out of Colonel Hobbes-Watkins; it was supplanted wholly by the muscular alertness Ellery had glimpsed the day before. Tony Hobbes-Watkins was very still, but he was no longer remotely languid. Inga was the palest projection of herself. Even Long John jiggled his peg nervously.

"Fifteen minutes or so after sunrise this morning," Ellery began, "just about the time I was down at the beach opening the treasure chest, Eric Ericsson was climbing the stairs in this house to the tower room. He was in his robe and slippers, and he carried his .38 automatic, with a full clip. His bedroom is below the tower shaft, which acts as an amplifier; evidently he was awakened by some noise from the tower room and decided to investigate. He took a gun with him because, even in his own house, he was afraid to be without it."

"I say—" began the Colonel furiously; but he did not say after all, he wiped the rolls on his neck.

"Someone was in the tower room. What was this person doing there—at dawn, in an empty room? There is only one thing of

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utility in that room—the peephole I punctured through the wall last night. The person Ericsson heard was watching me through the peephole. Watching me dig up the treasure."

They stared at him.

"Ericsson came to the landing and flung open the door. The man at the peephole whirled. Maybe they talked for a little while; maybe Ericsson was put off his guard. His gun came down, and the man across the room whipped out a revolver and fired a .25 calibre bullet into Ericsson's head, killing him instantly. But Ericsson's automatic had come up again instinctively as his murderer drew, and it went off, too—a split second after the murderer's. We know two shots were fired almost simultaneously because Miss Porter and I heard them, and because we found a .25 calibre bullet in Ericsson's head and a .38 shell on the floor near Ericsson's .38 automatic."

And Ellery said clearly, "The murderer ran down the tower stairs after the shots, heard the others coming—you'd all been awakened by the shots and dashed out of your rooms at once, you've said—realized he was trapped, and thereupon did the only thing he could: he pretended that he, too, had been awakened by the shots and he ran *back* up the stairs with the rest of you. The gun he managed to dispose of before I got back to the house from the beach.

"One of you," said Ellery, "was that murderer."

There was no sound in the room at all.

"We found the empty shell of Ericsson's discharged cartridge, as I say, near his body. He had fired once at his murderer, his automatic had ejected the shell, and the bullet had sped on its way.

"But here is the interesting fact: *We haven't found Ericsson's bullet.*"

Ellery leaned their way. "The tower room has been gone over all day by these officers and me. The bullet isn't there. There is no sign of it or its passage anywhere in the room—floor, walls, ceiling. The windows remain intact. They weren't open at the time of Ericsson's shot; as you remarked yesterday, Inga, they've been stuck fast for generations; and when we tried to open them today without breaking something, we failed.

"Nor did Ericsson's shot go wild. He was killed instantly, falling into the room head first; this means that when he fired, he was facing into the room. But just to be thorough, we went over the landing and the tower shaft, too. No bullet, no bullet mark, and no slightest opening through which the bullet might have passed."

"The peephole!" Nikki said involuntarily.

"No. There is considerable thickness to the walls. Ericsson in the doorway was at an extremely acute angle to the peephole.

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So while the bullet conceivably might have passed through the opening of the hole inside the tower room, it would have to have lodged inside the wall, or at least left some sign of its passage if it went clear through. We've torn down part of the wall to get a look inside. There is no bullet and no mark of a bullet.

"So the extraordinary fact is that while Ericsson's bullet must have struck something in that room, there is no sign of its having done so. Impossible? No.

"There is one logical explanation."

And Ellery said, "The bullet must have struck the only thing in that room which left it—the murderer. *One of you is concealing a bullet wound.*"

Ellery turned to the silent officers. "Let's have these three men stripped to the skin. And Nikki," he added, "go you somewhere with Inga—yes, I said Inga!—and do likewise."

And when the Colonel, raging, had been reduced to his fundamental pinkness, and his intent son stood similarly unclothed, and when what there was of Long John was grimly revealed also—and no wound was found on any of them, not so much as a scratch—Ellery merely blinked and faced the door through which Nikki had taken the murdered man's niece, the heir to his fortune and the treasure.

And the men re-dressed quickly, as if time were at their heels.

And when Nikki came back with Inga the police captain asked, "Where is Mrs. Hobbes-Watkins's wound, Miss Porter?"

"Mrs. Hobbes-Watkins," replied Nikki, "has no wound."

"Maybe," said the Coast Guard officer awkwardly, "maybe you didn't look—uh—"

"And maybe I did," said Nikki with a sweet smile. "I work for the great Ellery Queen . . . you know?"

So now the two officers turned to look at the great Ellery Queen, but with no appreciation of his greatness at all.

And the Coast Guard officer said, "Well."

He turned immediately back. For Ellery was growling, "If that's the case, it's obvious who killed Ericsson."

Ellery produced a cigarette and a lighter and went to work on them, and then he said, "It all goes back to what I dug up this morning. And what did I dig up? An old chest, some old coins, a great number of unmounted gems, and some empty gem settings. Nikki, you saw the empty settings. Of which materials were they made?"

"Gold, silver, and—"

"Platinum," said Ellery, and he waved his cigarette gently.

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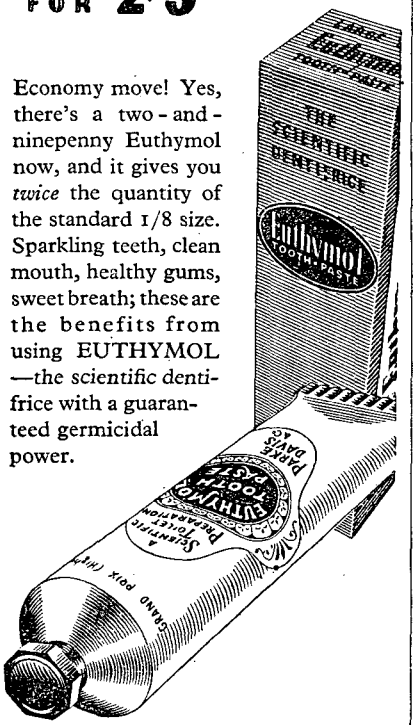

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"The metal platinum wasn't introduced into Europe until the mid-eighteenth century—*some fifty years after Kidd supposedly buried the chestful of jewels on this island.* It's even worse than that: *Platinum wasn't used for jewel setting until about* 1900, at which time Kidd had been dead a hundred and ninety-nine years.

"A phony, gentlemen. A plant. The whole thing.

"The 'treasure' I unearthed this morning was buried in that sand very recently, I'm afraid. It has no more connection with William Kidd or any other seventeenth century pirate than the loose change in my pocket. Oh, it was meant to be taken for a treasure Kidd buried—the chest is authentically old, and some old coins were strewn among the jewels. But the jewels, as proved by that platinum setting, are modern.

"Why should modern jewels be buried on an island in the guise of old pirate treasure? Well, suppose they were stolen property. As stolen property, they'd have to be disposed of through fences for a small proportion of their value. But as buried treasure they could be disposed of openly at market prices. Very clever.

"Eric Ericsson, gentlemen, suspected that Anthony Hobbes-Watkins and his 'father', Colonel Hobbes-Watkins—who's probably not his father at all—were not what they seemed. He was tragically right—they're a pair of European jewel thieves and, from the size of their accumulations, they must hold some sort of record for prowess in their exacting profession.

"They were cooling off in the Bahamas, wondering how best to turn their loot into cash, when Eric Ericsson and his niece called at New Providence Island for a visit. Hearing the purely mythical yarn about how Kidd had buried treasure on Ericsson's Island two hundred and fifty years ago—treasure that had never been found—these worthies got a remarkably ingenious idea. They would plant the jewels in a real old chest—the Bahamas were the headquarters of the buccaneers and are full of pirate relics; they would salt the stolen jewels with a few authentic old coins; and they would bury the chest on Ericsson's Island, to be 'discovered' by them at a later date.

"The plan revolved about Inga's infatuation for this fellow here; he pretended to reciprocate her love and he married her. As Ericsson's sole heir, Inga would inherit his entire estate, which included this island, when Ericsson died. And as Inga's husband, Tony Hobbes-Watkins would control it all, and when Inga died—an early and untimely death, eh, gentlemen?—our friends would be in the rosy clear . . . I'm sorry, Inga, but it seems to be a day for crushing blows."

Inga sat pallid and blank, her hand clutching Nikki's.

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" If you're trying to pin Ericsson's murder on me—" began the younger man in a swift and nasal voice.

But the Colonel said harshly, " Be quiet."

" Oh, that ? " said Ellery. " Let's see. We know that Ericsson's bullet struck his murderer, but obviously in a part that couldn't be wounded—his leg. *Stop him !* "

And when they had subdued the struggling caretaker and dug Eric Ericsson's bullet out of the pegleg, the police captain—who was glassy-eyed—said, " Then these two men here, Mr. Queen . . . they weren't in on Ericsson's murder . . . ? "

" The whole plot, Captain, was geared to Ericsson's murder," said Ellery with a shrug, " though I'm afraid Long John rather jumped ahead.

" Don't you see that they were all in the plot together ? How could our friend the Colonel, when he left the Bahamas after the wedding to smuggle the jewels into the States and get them to Ericsson's Island before the others sailed up to join him—how, I say, could the Colonel have planted the chest on the island unless the caretaker was taken into the gang ? Also, the stage had to be set for the ' discovery ' of the treasure : a hole bored through the tower room wall to sight on the chosen spot, the wallpaper doctored to implement the mythical clue of ' the needle's eye,' and so on—none of it possible unless Long John were declared in. He was, I suppose, to be paid off when Ericsson was disposed of and they got control, through Inga, of the estate and the island.

" What these gentry didn't allow for was the stupidity and avarice of Long John. They're far too clever operators to have planned to kill Ericsson the very night the treasure was located. Even if that had been their plan, they'd hardly have devised such a crude and obvious murder—especially with a trained investigator on the island. An ' accident ' would have been more their style. At their leisure, under selected conditions . . . like a storm, say, and an overturned boat . . . perhaps even with Inga a victim of the same accident, in that way gaining their objective in one stroke and with no danger to themselves.

" But Long John is simple-minded and, as Ericsson told me, a miser. He just couldn't wait. He heard me leave in the dark, realized my purpose, saw the dawn coming up, and hurried to the tower room to spy on me. He watched me dig the jewels up, probably saw them sparkling in the sun. When Ericsson surprised him in the tower at that very moment, all he could see were those jewels and his share of them when Ericsson should be killed. So Long John killed him—then and there. Speeding up the great day . . .

" Haste makes waste, eh, Colonel ? And Tony, I regret to in-

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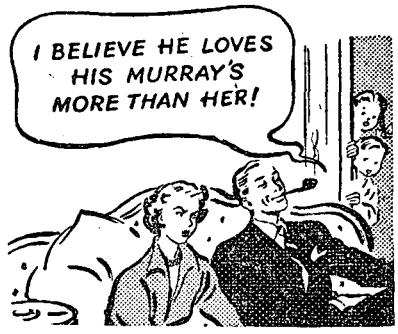

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form you that I'm going to take your wife to the best lawyer in New York and see what can be done about an immediate annulment.

"And now, gentlemen, if you'll remove these pirates," said Ellery to the officers, but looking soberly at Inga, "Nikki and I have some holes to refill."

* * *

ANSWERS to MURDER MOST FOUL on page 49

1. *Dr. Grimesby Roylott, in "The Speckled Band," by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The swamp adder which the Doctor had introduced into his step-daughter's room was driven back through the ventilator by Sherlock Holmes, to make a fatal attack on its master.*
2. *Phyllyp Sparowe, in the poem of that name by John Skelton. Jane Scroop asked all the birds to weep for her pet.*
3. *Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter, in "The Murders In The Rue Morgue," by Edgar Allan Poe. Dupin deduced that the two women were killed by an escaped orang-outang.*
4. *The gay young sorter, in "Gentle Alice Brown," by Sir W. S. Gilbert. He wooed Alice and was killed by her father, Robber Brown.*
5. *Sir Reuben Levy, in "Whose Body?" by Dorothy L. Sayers. Lord Peter Wimsey discovered that the body of Sir Reuben had been substituted for that of a tramp and dissected in a hospital.*
6. *The Albatross, in "The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner," by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The Ancient Mariner was periodically impelled to buttonhole a stranger and recount his shooting of the Albatross.*
7. *Julius Cæsar, in the play of that title by William Shakespeare. Cæsar appeared in the Capitol on the Ides of March and was stabbed by the conspirators.*
8. *John Ridd, in "Lorna Doone," by R. D. Blackmore. The murder of John Ridd by Carver Doone was avenged by John's son, Jan.*
9. *Harry Lime, in "The Third Man," by Graham Greene. Pursued through the sewers of Vienna, Lime was shot by Martins.*

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across : 1, Blizzard. 9, Emphasis. 10, Pignut. 11, Address. 12, Denier. 13, Este. 15, Aspirate. 17, Border dispute. 20, Brighton. 23, Caen. 24, Reeves. 25, Silence. 26, Assess. 27, Banditti. 28, Limiting.

Down : 2, Loiter. 3, Zanzibar. 4, Attar. 5, Dead as a door-nail. 6, Speediest. 7, Nausea. 8, Minute. 14, Stet. 16, Methylate. 18, Ogre. 19, Upper set. 20, Barman. 21, Inside. 22, Season. 24, Realm.

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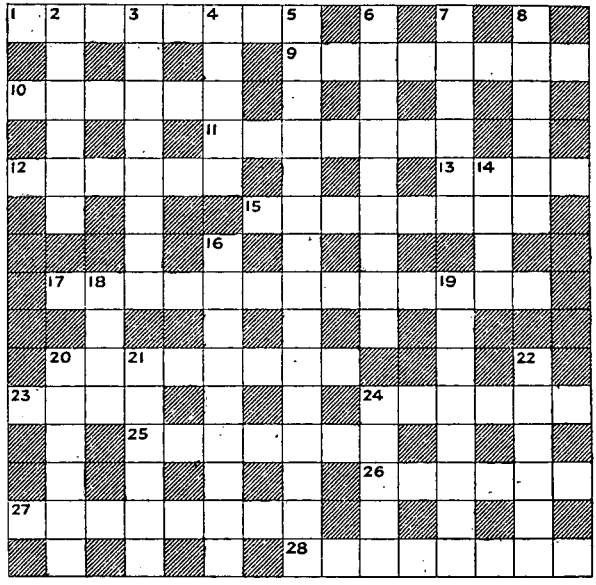
ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 143



CLUES

Across

1 Ribald disturbance about two reservists causes quite a storm (8).

9 Mis-shape mis-shapen (8).

10 The antelope's in a hole and turned to a vegetable! (6).

11 Skill where one lives (7).

12 Small coin but it looks as if it won't admit it (6).

13 Italian family composed of little heaps of sand (4).

15 Breathe like a buccaneer (8).

17 On the verge of a quarrel with Scotland? (6, 7).

20 "The night we went to Bannockburn by way of —Pier" (G. K. Chesterton) (8).

23 French town where one might break one's walking-stick (4).

24 Ties up the magistrates (6).

25 "— is only commendable In a neat's tongue dried and a maid not vendible" (The Merchant of Venice (7).

26 How to size up a female donkey? (6).

27 Foreign brigands who will not sing? (8).

28 Keeping the company exclusive? (8).

Down

2 To hang about is not much of a change for a worker (6).

3 The road to this island has also been travelled hopefully! (8).

4 Strangely enough the final ingredient does not spoil the perfume (5).

5 Orlando's idea, Ada, is to become completely lifeless (4, 2, 1, 4-4).

6 Quickest descent of the steep side (9).

7 Ill-feeling? (6).

8 Timely reminder (6).

14 Written to show you were right first time (4).

16 They are upset in twisted metal—that will turn their spirits mauve! (9).

18 He is to go back to the Engineers—a terrible being (4).

19 The *élite* who go down in the mouth (5, 3).

20 Why exclude him? He's so useful! (6).

21 The team on the field? (6).

22 "Love, all alike, no — knows, nor clime" (John Donne). (6).

24 Domain with genuine beginnings (5).

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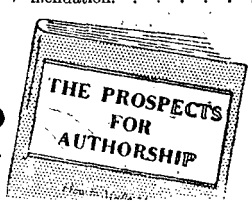
Student 357/3015: I have had my story accepted by **BLACKWOODS** who are paying me £25 for it . . . *Student 773/2119:* I thought it might interest you to know that **THE COUNTRYMAN** has accepted a short article of mine on an old country custom . . . *Student 184/315:* As you suggested, I submitted the articles to the **NEW STATESMAN.** One was published on the 17th July. I have also had an article accepted by **MEN ONLY** . . . *Student 181/282:* You may be interested to hear that I had a letter from the Editor of **ARGOSY**; they have offered me Twenty-five Guineas for my story . . . *Student 591/287:* You will be pleased that my article submitted for my Second Lesson was published in the **DAILY MIRROR** and I received Six Guineas for it . . . *Student 120/288:* I have established contact with the Editor of **PUNCH.** The item was accepted for "Charivaria" and is a good start . . . *Student 1179/347:* I succeeded in getting four Big Game stories into **COURIER** and another about "Shrove Tuesday." Another article appeared in the August issue of **BLACKWOODS** . . . *Student 1954/157:* I have just corrected a proof of my story for **WIDE WORLD**; they have since accepted another and I have sent in a third . . . *Student 171/162:* I have sold my story to **EVERYWOMAN** for 25 guineas . . . *Student 1106/156:* The **B.B.C.** accepted the script for the Light Programme—fee 9 guineas—after my first lesson . . . *Student 141/76:* The article which I wrote for the Second Test Paper appeared in the **SUNDAY MAIL.** Thanks for the recommendation. . . . . .



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